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July 2003

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

FROM THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
TO THE GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND REDISTRIBUTION
STRATEGY.

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I would like to confirm that this thesis has not previously been submitted in part or whole for the award of any degree. It is my own work, and any substantial contribution to and quotations in the dissertation have been cited and referenced.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank Dr. Thiven Reddy for his supervision, and the Department of Politics at UCT for their interest in my thesis. Also thanks to Ingrid Borgelt for helping me editing this thesis, and to Jarand Larsen for the encouragement he has showed, both when we were far apart, and in the finishing stage of my paper.

“To encourage development, you need both village-based development project at the micro-level and flagship project at the macro-level. The challenge is for government to prove that it is people-driven. This must be shown in budget, approaches and methodology”.¹

¹ Delani Mthembu, COE of the National Development Agency, interviewed by the Big Issue, South Africa, October 2002. p.14-15.

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ABSTRACT

During apartheid, the majority of South Africans were excluded from political, economic and social participation. When the apartheid regime ended in 1994, the South African government wanted to change the practices of the past by including the local, poor communities in the decision-making processes and involving them in development projects. Thus, their aim was to empower the previously disadvantaged groups. Within the new framework of an inclusive government, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was introduced in 1994. The key aspect of the RDP was to link reconstruction and development. The government therefore - committed itself to the values of people-centred development, participatory democracy and the involvement of civil society in policy formulation and implementation. Although the development thinking in post-apartheid South Africa has been argued to be much more than the expansion of income, wealth and economic growth, the government's introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) in 1996 indicates a totally opposite thought. The new macro-economic programme aims to stimulate growth by accelerating private sector investment and infrastructure development. Little attention has been paid to social development. This switch of policy, from the previous 'basic needs and people-oriented' Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), towards a more 'market-oriented and neo-liberalistic' strategy, has undoubtedly led to enormous concerns about the development focus of the African National Congress (ANC).

The intention of this thesis is to link the government's shift of policy (from the RDP to GEAR) to the scope of community participation during the period from 1994 to 2003. My arguments support the view that the ANC has drifted away from its participatory development approach, as was inaugurated within the RDP. Instead, a top-down approach to development has occurred and negatively impacted the nature of community participation. Indeed, the ideals of community participation have faltered.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Union
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA)
DMA	Durban Metropolitan Area
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Commission
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS	Growth and Development Strategy
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy
GNU	Government of National Unity
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IMF	International Monetary Foundation
KZN	KwaZulu Natal
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NGDS	National Growth and Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCD	People-Centred Development
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACP	South African Communist Party
SANCO	South African National Civics Organisations
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program
UF	Urban Foundation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

This thesis intends to generate an exploratory and analytical discussion on the debate around the nature and the extent of community participation¹ in South Africa's development sphere. The subject of community participation is of crucial importance in a democratic government such as the new South Africa², as it strikes directly at the core of the structuring of the relationship between citizens and their government. It is argued in this thesis that the adoption of GEAR has led to a decline of the developmental state, which was at the core of the early post-apartheid development thinking, and that the government has withdrawn from being an enabling institution, responsive to the needs of its people.

The focus of this thesis is mainly on the participation in development work at community level (local level), particularly on the income-poor³ and the socially deprived. Participation, in this scenario, is understood to be a voluntary process, which empowers the people. Thus, participation is an essential part of human growth, which should lead to self-confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility and cooperation (Burkey, 1993: 56). Further, this thesis adopts the underlying philosophy of the participatory approach (in general) and the radical view (in particular), which purports that local participation empowers the people to understand and articulate their problems, to develop a solution, and to organise the resources necessary to follow through. Outsiders, on the other hand, serve as catalysts by encouraging local members to be the primary decision-makers in the design and implementation of

¹ There have been many definitions and interpretations of participation, as participation in its own right is a broad and often-vague concept. It can mean everything from voting in elections, to participating in a neighborhood committee, or in a specific development project. Participation is not always visible, nor obvious, even in the longer term. This thesis is not concerned about voting or participation in legislature, but clearly focuses on people's participation in development processes. The distinction between citizen, community, popular and public participation is not clear-cut, nor is the concept of participation universally divided in this way. The phrase 'citizen participation in development processes' will, in this thesis, have the same meaning as 'community participation'.

² The new South Africa is a popular term for South Africa, used since the demise of apartheid and the first election in 1994 for a democratic and representative government.

³ 40 per cent of the total population in South Africa is, according to the United Nations Development Programme (2000), income-poor. About 60 per cent of Africans are classified as poor compared to just 1 per cent of whites. One should, however, bear in mind that this majority of people are not only materially poor, they are often also deprived of basic knowledge about their rights as citizens, and as city-dwellers, and of their own capacity to change their situation. Poor people lack control over resources and institutions of governance. These aspects of their poverty conspire to limit their capacity to influence the events and circumstances that govern their existence and thus reduce the development options that are open to them (Barberton, 1998: 3; Mitlin, in Lyons et al., 2000: 12).

activities in their community, thereby developing their own capacity to eventually manage without external assistance and to become stronger voices for their own needs within society.

Consequently, the community not only develops an increased ability to improve its condition, it also gains stronger decision-making ability and consensus-building skills that contribute to better problem-solving amongst diverse members and gives them a greater voice in the larger political structure. The development theorists, Oakley and Marsden (1984: 27) make this point clear as they write:

“ At its most basic, participation can be expressed as achieving power in terms of access to, and control of, resources necessary to protect livelihood”.

My interest in analysing the question of participation in South Africa's development process is based on the history of the country. The English and Dutch colonised South Africa in the seventeenth century. English domination of the Dutch descendants resulted in the Dutch establishing new colonies - the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The discovery of diamonds in these areas around 1900 resulted in an English invasion, which later sparked the Boer War. In the 1940s, quite some time after gaining independence from England, the Afrikaner National Party was able to secure a strong majority. With the enactment of apartheid laws in 1948, racial discrimination was institutionalised. Strategies in the National Party invented apartheid as a means to cement their control over the economic and social system. The aim of apartheid was to maintain white domination while extending racial separation. The majority of South African citizens were excluded from effective involvement and participation in the country's development processes, which was the result of the government's top-down planning and development strategies. Hence, the majority of the people were largely prevented from participation in matters that affected their own lives, and the result was fragmentation and disempowerment among ordinary people (Carolus, 1994: 1; Lyons et al., 2000: 7). This form of governance, characterised by racial discrimination, met enormous pressure from both internal and external opponents. When Nelson Mandela was released in February 1990 and the liberation movements were unbanned, a significant moment of change was reached (Barberton, 1998: 5). Participation subsequently became a central focus of South Africa's national democratic struggle – in both the union and the community sector.

The advent of democracy in 1994, after the first democratic election in April of the same year, and the subsequent acceptance of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) by the Government of National Unity (GNU)⁴, resulted in the emergence of opportunities for meaningful participation. With respect to developmental concerns, the RDP's vision favoured a participatory approach, in which development should be people-driven, i.e. an all-embracing effort in which development forums should bring together all major stakeholders to formulate and implement RDP development projects (Klandermans et al., 2001: 18). As stated in the RDP Base document:

“The RDP requires fundamental changes in the way that policy is made and programmes are implemented. Above all, the people must participate in decision-making... Democracy is more than electing representatives to power once every few years. It means enabling people to participate in decision-making at all levels of their lives” (ANC, 1994: 7; 24).

In this sense, the RDP initiatives should not be a state prerogative; but should rather encourage people and their organisations to participate in the reconstruction and development process. Consequently, the RDP plays a key role for civil society in terms of developmental processes, as it identifies the importance of community participation in the formulation and implementation of its policies. However, the RDP Office, which should have contributed to the reconstruction and development processes in a co-ordinated manner, did not last for long. In 1995, a top-level cabinet committee was established to make recommendations for macro-economic growth, which ultimately led to the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR).

A clear division exists between the opponents and the proponents of the GEAR strategy. Some scholars, for instance, argue that the ANC introduced this macro-economic policy to enhance the international competitiveness of the country's economy. The adoption of GEAR was well received by major international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Hence, GEAR is often referred to as the government's neo-liberal strategy. According

⁴ The GNU was a coalition administration in which the ANC shared cabinet positions with the National Party (NP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), the two minority partners. This power-sharing form of government was designed to last for five years, from 1994 to 1999, but it only held together until the passing of constitution in 1996. Thereafter, governance was moved to the current ANC alliance (Klandermans et al., 2001: 18; Koelble, 1998: 70).

to other proponents, it has been argued that the announcement of GEAR has had little influence at local level because of the strong commitment of local government and partnerships to the RDP principles. The government, for instance, insists that the RDP is still in policy and maintains that it has operationalised the RDP through its Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). According to this view, the RDP Base document, the Green and White papers, MTEF and GEAR are all significant outputs of the RDP policy (ANC, 1997; Liebenberg and Stewart, 1997: xv). The announcement of the new macro-economic strategy has, on the other hand, received criticism specifically from the left wing, the Congress of South African Trade Union (COSATU) and various community organisations. These critics of GEAR argue that the shift in policy away from the RDP, which envisaged a developmental and interventionist state and strong civil society participation, towards a 'high-handed, technocratic, expert consultant-driven approach', indicates not only a change to market sensitive politics, but also a change in the character of the state from an instrumental, empowerment model, towards a bureaucratic model of limiting participation. Social development has, according to the opponents, clearly taken a secondary position as the government has not provided money for community structures or civil society organisations (Barberton, 1998: 6; Tapscott, 2001: 11). The arguments in this thesis rely on the assertions that the closure of the RDP Office in March 1996 represented a shift in the new government's emphasis, from service delivery to economic growth. In this thesis I will try to show how the GEAR strategy has thrown out much of what was commendable in the RDP. Whilst the RDP aimed to achieve its goals through a 'people-driven process', GEAR is not as explicit about the role or extent of public involvement in its policies, which centre on economic restructuring, trade and labour reform. (Lyons et al., 2001b: 276).

1.1 DESIGN, RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The research question in this thesis is: 'Has the GEAR strategy threatened the participatory development approach which was favoured by the RDP?'. This question can further be turned into a hypothesis, saying: 'When GEAR was introduced, the ANC drifted away from its people-oriented development focus'. Andersen (1990: 85) describes a hypothesis as an assertion about actual facts, where one has to compare and test the assertion against the reality to find out if whether it can be verified or not. In my case the actuality is about local people's

participation in South Africa's development processes, within the period from 1994 to 2003. The intention here is to discuss the relation between the government's shift of policy and the nature and extent of community participation. If it turns out that the scope of community participation has changed, we can be said to have found a connection between the government's development policy and community participation; if it has decreased, we can say that the hypothesis is verified, and if it has increased, the hypothesis is false. My arguments and statements will be conducted through an evaluation of the government's shift of policy within the period 1994 to 2003, and through an evaluation of international and national economic trends affecting the South African state. However, it is important to note that I am not attempting to verify a causal linkage between macro-economic policy and community participation, as this is extremely difficult to do. I am merely investigating a possible correlation between the two.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One introduces the central theme of the thesis and includes the research question, the research design and the analytical framework. Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework and is a review of the historical concept of participatory development and community participation. The chapter is divided into two sections; the first provides a detailed discussion on the theoretical aspect of development, and the second section examines contemporary trends in South Africa's development thinking. To be able to discuss the contemporary trends in development thinking in general, and in South Africa in particular, it is necessary to look at how development has been conceptualised and practiced historically. Since some development theorists have argued that participatory development, within the contemporary understanding of development, is impossible without community participation and a strong state, I have chosen to examine those two concepts explicitly. The main aim of this chapter is to highlight how the emphasis on development in South Africa has changed from a situation where the state was seen as an important and involvement-focused factor in development, to a situation where the state has stepped back from full involvement in development, and has also withdrawn from direct provision in the service sector. My intention is to further show how these changes have affected the opportunities for community participation. The intention in Chapter Three and Chapter Four is to address how community participation has been conceptualised in South Africa's national development policy. Between 1994 and 1996 (within the RDP period) there was an intense

focus on participation. After 1996, when GEAR was introduced, participation became associated with non-delivery. As a consequence, government concentrated all its efforts on delivery and pushed participation to the margins. In essence, participation was pushed aside in the interest of getting the job done. By comparing the development elements of the RDP and GEAR, my intention in Chapter Four is to show how the ANC, with its neo-liberal approach, has moved away from its previous socialist and people-centred ideology. This chapter aims to show how the South African state has stepped back from full involvement in community-based development projects, withdrawn from direct provision and increased its control over resources and development funds. South Africa has progressively moved towards a bureaucratic model of limited participation, whereas before, developments were defined and initiated at grassroots level, funded on an ad hoc basis from a range of sources, led by independent consultants and managed at a local level. A far more state-centred process has now developed. My claim is that this process indicates a U-turn away from what the ANC expressed during the struggle and leads to a situation where the development focus is rather top-down than bottom-up and people-centred. Chapter Five provides the empirical framework of the thesis or, in other words, participation in practice. The aim of this chapter is to *illustrate* the scope and nature of community participation within both the RDP and the GEAR periods. I am using data from a research study done by Michael Lyons, Carin Smuts and Anthea Stephens⁵ on participation in community-based development projects in three metropolitan areas in South Africa, namely, Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. I am investigating two of the fifteen projects studied, namely, Bester's Camp in Inanda, Durban and Gugulethu Central Meat Market in Cape Town. My aim is to analyse the findings and compare them to my theoretical findings from the literature review and the RDP/GEAR debate. One of the reasons I chose to use the research done by this research team is because the projects they have investigated exist within the sphere of community-led initiatives, involving the community, local government, founders, consultants and, to a lesser degree, the central state. It is, therefore, very relevant to my research question. I have been in direct contact with Dr. Michael Lyons, who works for the Faculty of the Built Environment at South Bank University, London, and through him I have gained access to workshop reports and reprints of articles from the study, as well as from a seminar publication, obtained when the three researchers collected the papers submitted by a number of presenters at feedback and

⁵ Dr. Michael Lyons and Anthea Stephens are in the faculty of the Built Environment, South Bank University in London, while Carin Smuts is with CS Studio Architects in Cape Town.

discussion seminars held in May 1999 in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Another important aspect of their study is that all the projects investigated are located within the built environment sphere. When I commenced working on this thesis, I wanted to look at projects within the built environment because they provide an opportunity for local knowledge and best practices to be shared and, thus, present the underlying philosophy of the participatory approach, which is the framework adopted in this thesis. The argument in Chapter Five is that a strong relation exists between policy changes that have taken place within the last decade, and people's involvement in development projects. Chapter Six presents the conclusion of the thesis and contains a summary of the aforementioned chapters.

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CHAPTER TWO:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE DEVELOPMENT DEBATE

As the independence movement swept across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean islands in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a whole new development debate occurred, both domestically and internationally. Spurred on by expectations of rapid economic growth and positive social transformation, economists, political scientists and others began to pay attention to the practical and theoretical problems of development in Third World countries. The concept of development has since been defined in many ways, usually in terms of economic, political or social development⁶. In this context, it is worth noticing that since the Second World War, economic growth and development have been considered synonymous within the context of a free market-oriented economy. Thus, economic growth became the dominant understanding favoured by the majority of governments and multilateral agencies (Blomström and Hettne, 1984: 8; Thomas, 2001: 562).

Marked by the history of apartheid, South Africa became a late arrival on the development scene. Development did not have a good image in the apartheid era, as a minority of whites had authority and total control over most of the resources. Inequalities in income, wealth and services were highly visible and posed major challenges for social reconstruction. As the apartheid system lost its legitimacy and became increasingly dysfunctional, and the democratic government took office, a more positive approach to development emerged. The first draft of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) highlighted the importance of the delivery of basic needs, in the context of the transformation of the state and society, to uplift the social and moral fabric of the society as a whole. Development, as a 'people-centred process', emerged as the main interpretation, where human empowerment, participation, gender equality, equitable growth, poverty reduction and long-term sustainability were important concerns (Turok, 1999: 7-9).

As this chapter will show, there has been an embracing trend in South Africa's development thinking towards participatory development, and towards participation as both a means and an end. Participatory development recognises community participation as a necessary part of

⁶ For accurate definitions of economic, political and social development, together with a description of the relationship between the three, see Stan Burkey (1993), *People First – A Guide to Self-Reliant Participatory Rural Development*, p. 35–39.

development activities at community level, and as a basic operational principle of development programmes and projects. In contrast, economic growth has recently become the dominant notion in South Africa's development thinking, where many believe that in whatever way growth is derived; that growth will provide the much-needed resources for the citizenry (Burkey, 1993: 26; Midgley, 1995: 2; Turok, 1999: 9). Within such an interpretation, development represents a process of economic change brought about by industrialisation.

2.1 APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT

In the field of development studies, there exists a broad variety of theories, paradigms and approaches, which are concerned about the meaning of community participation and community development. The concern in this thesis, however, has to do with development paradigms that intentionally and actively involve local people, especially those that have been bypassed by previous development strategies. Thus, this chapter focuses on the participatory component of the development process, i.e. people's participation in development decisions that affect them. To be able to understand the entire picture of the emergence of modern development theory, together with an understanding of the South African government's interpretation of the rhetoric of community participation, this chapter will review some of the strands that have been of significance to the development work; namely, *the positive approach*, *the reflectivist approach* (normative and radical theory), *neo-liberalism* and *the participatory development approach*.

2.1.1 POSITIVIST APPROACHES

Contemporary development theories have their roots in positivism. Both the *modernisation theory* of 1950 and 1960, and the 1970s *dependency theory* were positivist approaches to development, which discussed how development actually takes place. These approaches to development include features such as:

- a belief in a neutral observation language as the proper foundation of knowledge;
- a value-free ideal of scientific knowledge; and

- a belief in the methodological unity of the sciences (Wetmore and Theron, 1998: 33).

During the 1960s, which have been named ‘the first development decade’, post-colonial states that opted for a capitalist model of development adopted the modernisation theory, which came to be the dominant notion in development work. This theory of development was simply economic and based upon simple models of growth, in which capital formation was the key factor (Blomström and Hettne, 1984: 19). It used Western societies as role models and argued that all societies shift from the traditional and primitive to the modern, through a series of clearly defined stages of economic growth. Development and economic growth were cited as being synonymous with progress and higher levels of civilisation (Abbot, 1996: 12; Burkey, 1993: 27; Roodt, in Coetzee and Graaff, 1996: 313). Truman set the political basis for the modernisation theory in 1949, when he stated that:

“We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advantages and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas” (quoted in Abbot, 1996: 17).

Within this view, development was expected to be a derivative process in which underdeveloped countries gradually assume the qualities of industrialised nations and, thus, eventually become capitalist states. This process, from a pre-industrial state to a mature capitalist state, occurs through a number of ‘stages of growth’, and was to be achieved through elite investment in urban industry, domestic savings and international aid. The benefits of such a process were that capital and technology would be transferred, or ‘trickle down’⁷ to the developing world. Furthermore, development was seen essentially as a question of increasing gross levels of savings and investment until the economy reached a take-off point into self-sustaining development (Abbot, 1996: 19; Burkey, 1993: 27, Roodt in Coetzee and Graaff, 1996: 314).

The modernisation theory seeks to identify the variables in society that facilitate the modernisation process. Hence, it might be criticised for ignoring the structure of societies, as it argues that development will occur as soon as the pattern variables in a society change.

⁷ The idea behind the ‘trickle down’ thought was that overall economic growth, as measured by increases in the GDP, would automatically bring about benefits for the poorer classes.

Further, it forgets that the resource-intensive path of development pursued by the Western industrial societies could neither carry on into the future at the same pace, nor necessarily be applied on a global scale. Its simple formula, which argues that economic growth will lead to development, fails to remember the role of the people on the ground. The focus is rather more on the state as a vehicle for economic growth and development, with little attention being paid to the social dimension of the development process.

In contrast to the modernisation theory, the dependency school of thought argues that changing pattern variables in a society does not lead to development. The dependency theory uses the historical development of society (which views the world dualistically, as a developed centre with a dependant periphery), as the theoretical basis for a more radical transformation of society, and demonstrates its argument by referring to earlier contact with the West, which definitely did not lead to development (Abbot, 1996: 18-19). The dependency approach emerged in Latin America as an effective criticism of the modernisation theory, and was originated from two intellectual trends, namely *neo-Marxism* and the so-called '*ECLA development thinking*'. The former reflects a certain dualism in Marxist thinking, while the latter was rooted in the earlier Latin American discussion on development that ultimately formed the United Nations' Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in 1948 (Blomström and Hettne, 1984: 27)⁸. Dependency theorists, such as André Gunder Frank (1967), stressed how the central nations benefit from trade, whereas the peripheral nations, or the Third World, suffer. The periphery produced cheap primary products, which were exported to the developed nations. There they were converted into manufactured goods, before they were re-exported to the periphery at a much higher price. Thus, we have a situation where socio-economic dependency (neo-colonialism) generates underdevelopment or, as Burkey (1993:28) calls it, "the development of underdevelopment".

The criticisms of the modernisation paradigm have been mainly concerned with simplified growth theories and foreign trade as the prime mover behind development. The theory has, to a considerable extent, been accused of undermining the idea of progress as a more or less automatic and linear process (Blomström and Hettne, 1984: 45). On the one hand, the dependency school played an important role as a catalyst in forming more relevant and less

⁸ See, for example, Blomström and Hettne (1984) for a detailed discussion of the background to the dependency approach. The writers focus specifically on the convergence of neo-Marxism and ECLA. See p. 27-44.

ethnocentric approaches to development while, on the other hand, as argued by Stan Burkey (1993: 29), the dependence theory has failed to construct its own theory on development. Thus, as it failed to explain the complex relationship between the centre and the periphery, it was clear that a more universal approach to development was needed.

2.1.2 REFLECTIVIST APPROACHES

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the development debate took a new turn. As the world was facing the very beginning of a new decade of counter-currents, a revitalised and growing interest emerged regarding real world problems and crises within development policies and practices. The growing realisation was that we live in a world of profound crises, i.e. a world of dehumanising poverty, collapsing ecological systems and deeply stressed social structures. Yet, as the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were introduced in both Latin America and Africa, a curious confluence was to emerge, which drew in all of the perspectives on and arguments for participation, which were identified earlier. Consequently, it became clear during this period that the orthodox conception of 'trickle down' had not worked. Many political scientists also believed that the government's motives behind so-called community development programmes were only a means of exerting political control over the population, or to contain communism and combat insurgency (Midgley, 1995: 118-119). Hence, various analyses and examinations of underdevelopment began to offer different explanations for the causes of people's poverty, and to suggest different forms of project design. Poor people were seen as being excluded and marginalised from both broader societal participation and also from direct involvement in development initiatives. Based on the attempts to define a more universal approach to development, incorporating the complex relationships between both central and peripheral development, reflective approaches emerged as critical alternative approaches to both the modernisation theory and the dependency theory. Both normative and radical theories belong to the reflectivist paradigm as rejections of the earlier dominant mainstream (Burkey, 1993: 29-30; Thomas, 2001: 568).

In South Africa, the Constitutional Assembly drew up a Bill of Rights for the new Constitution in 1993. The issue of social, economic and cultural rights were brought into focus, together with the 'right to development'. The right to development approach grew out

from both the normative and radical stands, which will be further examined below. This approach appeals to a right to development for communities, states and people who were victims of colonial domination and, therefore, subjected to underdevelopment (Turok, 1999: 10). It is based on the United Nation's Declaration on the Right to Development passed by the UN General Assembly in December 1986, which states that:

"Development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom" (Cited from Turok, 1999: 10-11).

The Declaration recognises the importance of human beings as the central subject of development and as an active participant and beneficiary thereof. It also recognises the role of the state as a promoter for "progressive enhancement of the right to development" by policy measures, legislation and other means.

2.1.2.1 Normative Theory

The normative approach of the late 1970s and early 1980s included paradigms such as *global interdependence*, *eco-development* and *another development*. Self-help and self-reliance became catch phrases within those approaches. In contrast to the positivist approaches, these new strategies focused on the content of development rather than the form. Rather than limiting discussion to questions relating to the mobilisation of the productive forces of development, such as labour, capital and trade, the normative approach was concerned with the function and meaning of development. It was declared that a process of growth that did not lead to the fulfilment of basic human needs was a development farce (Burkey, 1993: 29-30; Clayton et al., 1997).

However, it seems that 'human resource development', 'self-help' and 'self-reliance' remained relatively discreet until these aspects met with international crises and neo-liberal

economic reforms in the 1980s. In this emergent paradigm, all of the perspectives on and arguments for participation, identified earlier, were to find a place.

2.1.2.2 Radical Theory

The radical approach came to dominate the debate on community development and community participation in the mid-eighties. It emerged from the occasional government, UN agency, grassroots movements, NGOs and some academics, and was also called *neo-Marxism*⁹ and/or *alternative development thinking*. Unlike earlier liberal and humanist views, this thinking is overtly anti-statist and rejects government sponsorship of local development, but calls for the empowerment of local people (Midgley, 1995: 119). According to Monty J Roodt, such a view on development perceives participation as:

“... a transforming act, i.e. that the very fact of participation (coupled with political education) transforms people’s consciousness and leads to a process of self-actualisation which enables oppressed people to take control of their lives, simultaneously challenging the dominating classes and their political regime”
(Roodt, in Coetzee and Graaff, 1996: 315).

Those who belong to this group of theorists argue that participation can only be effective if it is direct and allows communities ultimate control in deciding their own affairs. Thus, people at grassroots level were increasingly considered as more active participants in the implementation of development and, increasingly, in meeting the cost of development. Development policy-makers and planners of the late 1980s began to argue for societal level political participation and also to devise strategies whereby poor people could become more directly involved in development efforts. This thinking reflects a bottom-up approach to development, which emphasises action from below and focuses on the people as ‘local experts’ (Korten, 1990).

⁹ The radicalised community participation approach was often labelled neo-Marxism, as some community activists drew their inspiration from the Marxist and Maoist revolutionary traditions, believing that capitalism was to blame for the problems of poverty and deprivation in the Third World. They further believed that community action would mobilise the masses and result in the overthrow of capitalism and, thus, create popular institutions, which should ensure the well-being of the people (Midgley, 1995: 119).

Oakley and Marsden wrote the following in 1984 about development and community participation:

“Meaningful participation of the rural poor in development is concerned with direct access to the resources necessary for development and some active involvement and influence in the decisions affecting those resources. To participate meaningfully implies the ability to positively influence the course of events” (Cited from Burkey, 1993: 59).

According to David Korten, the president and founder of the People-Centred Development Forum (PCD Forum), development is:

“A process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilise and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life, consistent with their own aspirations” (Korten, 1990: 67).

The two quotations above indicate that both Korten and Oakley and Marsden believe that participation leads to greater control by the poor over their own life situation. Further, they acknowledge that only the people themselves can define what they consider to be improvements in the quality of their lives. This is the basis of participatory development or, in other words, human-centred development, which is the notion on which this thesis focuses. Both definitions represent the approach reflected in the RDP philosophy, as it notes:

“Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment” (RDP White Paper, 1994: 5).

From these perceptions it can be deduced that meaningful participation in terms of development is concerned with achieving power, i.e. the power to influence the decisions that affect one's livelihood. According to Roodt (1996: 317), such involvement of the people is considered the bottom-line for the successful implementation of any development project or programme. Further, this participatory development thinking emphasises participation of the majority of the population in the process of development. Such efforts to promote people's

participation in development would break decades of top-down, non-participatory practice, and involve a fundamental shift in both attitudes and methodology among major donor development agencies¹⁰.

Although proponents of the radical community participation approach believe that their approach seeks to integrate economic and social policies within a dynamic development process, and thus results in significant social changes, Midgley and his co-editors argue in their book, *Community Participation, Social Development and the State* (1986), that their thought is based more on rhetoric and ideological commitment than a careful analysis of the effectiveness of different forms of community involvement (Midgley, 1995: 121).

2.1.3 NEO-LIBERALISM AND DEVELOPMENT

However incorporated and people-centred the 1980s perceptions on development were, the demise of both the cold war and a bipolar world, together with the lapse into neo-liberal economic and political philosophy (the so-called Washington consensus¹¹) came to dominate development thinking across the globe and, therefore, represents an important ideological shift towards a policy which favoured a minimalist state and an enhanced role of the market. This development thinking builds on the dominant understanding of development being synonymous with economic growth, and it appears that the previous development orthodoxy remains essentially unchanged (Thomas, 2001: 564-573). The belief equates human progress with growth in the market value of economic output and subordinates both human and environmental considerations to that goal (Korten, 1990). Throughout the Third World the state was rolled back and the market given the role of major engine of growth and associated development.

¹⁰ The growing importance of 'development from below', or 'people-centred development', was imitated in the creation of the Development Bank of Southern Africa, in 1980, to reduce the role of the state and to develop the Bantustan areas economically on a 'participatory' basis. It is worth mentioning that the World Bank regards South Africa as a role model for its own project on 'African Management in the 1990s' (Munro, 1996: 26).

¹¹ The Washington Consensus is often considered synonymous with neo-liberalism and globalisation. More specifically, the concept refers to a meeting in Washington in 1990 where some of the top economists from the World Bank and the International Monetary Foundation met to set a strategy to develop Third World countries. Its originator, John Williamson, coined the phrase the same year 'to refer to the lowest common denominator of policy advice being addressed by the Washington-based institutions to Latin American countries as of 1989' (Williamson, 2000). It is argued by Sampie Terreblanche that South Africa's first step towards the Washington consensus was taken in January 1995 when an agreement on trade liberation was signed with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Terreblanche, 2002: 144).

Neo-liberalism and its influence on development processes, both internationally and in South Africa, will be further discussed in both this chapter and the next. This chapter's aim, however, is to show how the interpretation of the development process has changed in a historical perspective, and how today we deal with two contradictory approaches: the participatory development approach and neo-liberalism. Although neo-liberalism came to dominate the international development theory, this thesis believes that reflective theories, especially the radical approach, are a good and valid alternative to the mainstream. Hence, neo-liberalism relies on the belief and argument that what we need is a development strategy that puts the community's need at the top of its agenda. The intention of the next section of this chapter is to give an explanation as to why people should be considered as the central most important factor in development, and why it is important to empower them.

2.2 PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Wetmore and Theron (1998: 29) have argued that the development field in South Africa, within the transition period to democracy, experienced an important shift towards participatory development. Participatory development refers to concepts such as community participation, self-reliance, capacity building and empowerment. Participatory development has also been labelled *people-centred* or *people-driven development*, as it involves people from lower levels in the development process and includes all aspects of life within a community and people's relationships with each other. This form of development was central to the South African reconstruction process, where development through 'collective determination' or participation became an essential tenet of the RDP (Maganya in Maganya and Houghton (eds.), 1996: 14).

2.2.1 CONCEPTUALISING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation has, since the 1980s, been assumed a desired and necessary part of community development activities. It is widely recognised as a basic operational principle of development programmes and projects, and has been applied in health, education, housing, social work and urban and rural development in both non-governmental and statutory social

development programmes (Clayton, Oakley and Pratt, 1997; Midgley, 1986: vii; Spiegel, 1968).

Paul (1988: 2), writing for the World Bank, was the first to define a comprehensive conceptual framework for community participation. At the end of the 1980s he defined community participation as:

“An active process by which beneficiary/client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self reliance or other values they cherish”.

Stan Burkey (1993: 56-57), who came into the discussion a bit later, believes in participation as an essential part of human growth and as a basic human need. He refers to participation as being far more than the mere mobilisation of labour forces or the coming together to hear about pre-determined plans. According to him:

“Participation must be much more than a policy statement, there must be a genuine commitment to encourage participation in all aspects and all levels of development”.

Both Paul and Burkey emphasise participation as an essential part of human growth. Furthermore, they view the poor as ‘local experts’ in the development process. Burkey’s definition of participation indicates that participation is a process in which the rural poor themselves become more aware of their own situation, of the socio-economic reality around them, of their real problems, the causes of these problems, and what measures they themselves can take to begin changing their situation. This process constitutes a new process of self-transformation through which people grow and mature as human beings. Thus, participation is self-reliant; people at grassroots level must feel and believe that it is their own efforts that are driving the development process (Burkey, 1993: 50).

The UNDP’s *Guidebook on Participation* (1997) adopts a similar approach to participation as it states that people's participation cannot merely be proclaimed; it has to be promoted. This process “takes time, resources, understanding and perseverance, and the end result should be a

development process which is not exclusively in the control of external professionals but which also involves local people, their representatives, their ideas and their skills and knowledge". Within such an understanding of participation, people's involvement in development can ensure sustainability, make development activities more effective and help to build local facilities.

The abovementioned views belong to the international trends that support and promote community participation in the development fields in the Third World. These interpretations of community participation argue against the conventional development field, or the so-called 'blueprint' approach, which makes the resource-poor wait upon the elite researcher to come and find out the facts about them, to write about them and make policy recommendations for outsiders to then solve their problems. In the same way, similar proponents of community action urge local people to take over full control of community development activities and to rely on their own initiative. They argue that real and direct participation in social development is needed for both instrumental and developmental reasons. Community participation serves immediate instrumental goals such as the identification of felt needs as well as the mobilisation of local resources. Participation also promotes broader social development ideals; through participating in decision-making for social development, ordinary people experience a sense of fulfilment, which contributes to a heightened sense of community and a strengthening of community bonds (Midgley, 1986: 9).

Other advantages that can be derived from a participatory approach are that participation:

- helps with coalition formation and consensus building and is viewed as a process of empowerment that helps to amplify traditionally unacknowledged voices;
- acts to help parties gain insight into local conditions and is considered a basic democratic right of the people to be involved in matters affecting their own circumstances;
- can increase the efficiency of development activities (by involving local resources it can make better use of expensive external costs);
- can help to secure the sustainability of these activities, as beneficiaries assume ownership and are willing to maintain the momentum; and

- may help to build local facilities and develop the abilities of local people to manage and to negotiate development activities¹².

The participatory approach argues that most people do in fact take part in community affairs and the development of their communities. Further, its advocates identify statism as a problem, arguing that state social provisions are centralised, bureaucratically administered, governed by impersonal regulations and routines, and ignorant of the needs of individuals. The core of this argument is that increased centralisation of the state in all societies has diminished the capacity of ordinary people to influence decisions and to contribute meaningfully to social development (Midgley, 1986: 8-9).

Even though the participatory approach is correct in many of its declarations, as mentioned above, both because it facilitates social service delivery by lowering costs and smoothing implementation, and because it promotes a feeling of belonging and integration in the community, there exist people who are evidently critical of its community participation ideals (Midgley, 1986: 34). Some of the criticisms are around practical issues, as it is concerned that:

- Delays might be experienced in project start-ups if communities are consulted, because negotiations can prove time-consuming and communities might also oppose the project, thus resulting in further delays.
- Participation necessitates an increase in staff, which will increase the delay and can also become time-consuming and costly.
- The excessive involvement of less-experienced people, as well as their lack of knowledge regarding the project, can be a major stumbling block.

Pressure to raise the level and range of services might result in latent conflicts, which will be detrimental to the project (UNDP's *Guidebook on Participation*, 1997). Another critical issue, according to Midgley (1986: 36-37), is whether or not community participation can achieve real improvement in social conditions as believed by many proponents of community participation. Critics of such thought believe that real improvement in welfare flows not from

¹² For a further discussion of advantages and disadvantages of participation, see UNDP's *Guidebook on Participation* (1997), Chapter 1, p. 6-8. Online: <http://www.undp.org/csopp/paguide1.htm>

community mobilisation, but rather from wider social and economic changes in society, eg those belonging to the right wing believe that the problems of mass poverty will not be eradicated by community participation but rather by the emergence of the values of individualism and competitive enterprise, while Marxian writers believe that revolutionary transformation of society is the only possible way to bring about real improvements in welfare for the masses.

It is, as we have seen, an undoubted truth that participation means different things to different people. However, the development literature gives the impression that development revolves mainly around the positive aspects of community participation. Big words have been used as to how to promote an active citizenry, where the people are expected to politicise their activities and actively organise themselves to demand the services to which they are entitled. Unfortunately, it is easier to use this means of participation as a catchword, than to actually involve the people in the participation process. Promoting people's participation implies a very different way of working, different approaches and methods and different expectations. It is important that staffs at all levels are aware of such implications.

2.2.2 PARTICIPATION AS A MEANS AND AN END

In the debate around the meaning of people's participation there exists a broad spectrum of discussion as to whether participation is a means used to achieve development (and to accomplish the aims of a project more efficiently, effectively or cheaply), or as an end in itself (where the community or group sets up a process to control its own development). Both types of participation imply vastly different power relations between members of a community, as well as between the community members and the state and/or agency institutions (Burkey, 1993: 58; Nelson and Wright, 1995: 1).

Oakley and Marsden (1984) belong to the school that regards participation as *an end* in itself, and believe that it is the unavoidable consequence of the process of empowerment and liberation. The state of achieving power and participating meaningfully in the development process is, according to them, the object of the exercise. This thinking belongs to the historical, international trend in community participation, which argued that the major effort

should be concentrated upon the empowering process (Burkey, 1993: 58). In the history of South Africa, involvement in development projects has been meaningful only for those who were allowed to participate; it has, thus, been based on a *means* approach. This approach understands participation as the participant's 'power' in their confidence in themselves, and as a method of achieving a specific, generally project-related objective. Their personal and collective abilities to exercise power within the existing structural and institutional constraints can undoubtedly be enhanced (Nelson and Wright, 1995: 17). One should, however, bear in mind that the distinction between the two interpretations is neither clear-cut nor mutually exclusive, but they do represent two different purposes and approaches to promoting development.

Participation in development can also be interpreted as both a means and an end in the process of empowering and liberating these people for the ultimate betterment of their own life. Wetmore and Theron (1998: 37) argue that:

"Conceptualisation of participatory development for the resource-poor is not a once-off process. Development in itself embraces change, thus requiring that the shared concept of development be continually adapted".

This 'forever moving the goalposts', as it is called, highlights the fact that development towards self-reliance is a process of continual learning which demands the participation of all. Taylor (1992: 24), describes participation as both a means and an end, as he argues that:

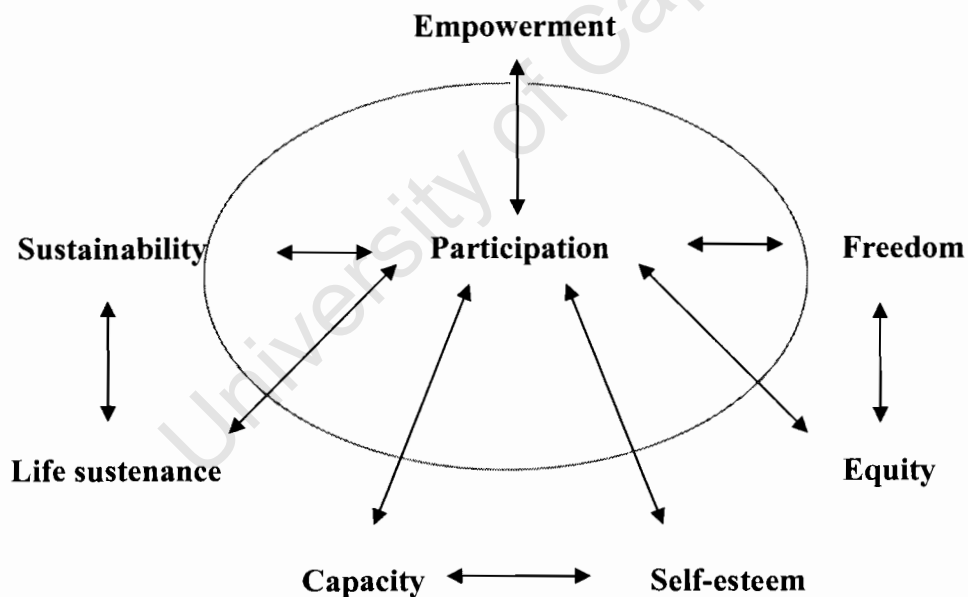
"Participation is understood as both a means and an end and functions at the level of local communities who must enter the participatory process at the first stage and be in control of all subsequent stages of action".

The meaning of Taylor's argument is that participation cannot be produced from above. It is generated from below, although external agents can act as catalysts. Although participation operates at the level of local communities there is no assumption that these are homogenous, and social differences of class, gender and generation are recognised.

This thesis adopts the notion of participation as a both means and an end. To understand such an interpretation it may be useful to look at Wetmore and Theron's model from 1998 (see *Model 1*). This model shows how it can be argued that even though development is a normative concept, which is value-laden, multi-dimensional and inter-related, and involves choices about set goals, in all ideologies these goals are to achieve the full potential of all the people in a community. The goals include *life sustenance* (the ability to provide for basic needs, such as food, shelter and protection), *self-esteem* (the ability to possess a sense of worth and self-respect, and *freedom* (the ability to make choices, which will influence or determine one's future). Wetmore and Theron (1998: 36-37) argue that if these goals are to be achieved, the following changes must take place:

- The *capacity* of citizens to influence their own future must be expanded.
- Development must progress on the basis of *equity* so that equality is achieved.
- Political *empowerment* must be encouraged, so that people can participate in their own development.

This will result in *sustainable development* for a better future.



Model 1: Model on community participation as a means and an end, based on Wetmore and Theron, 1998.

Wetmore and Theron's model indicates how participatory development for the resource-poor is more than a once-off process. It shows how development is about changes and, thus, that it is an educational and empowering process.

When one views participatory development as an empowering process among the poor, the concepts of *empowering* and *process* need to be clarified. Participatory development is empowering because experience in how to influence, implement and control activities which improve one's own living conditions is gained by the local people through their active interaction with the change agents and through their own attempts at individual and collective action. It is a process because people must begin with what they know and from where they are. From this modest start, they can gradually increase their knowledge and the control over their lives through the personal experience acquired. This process requires time, but results in changes and transformation that are long-lasting (Burkey, 1993: 206). Stan Burkey (1993:57) has written that "where there is genuine participation, mistakes will be made; there will be failures and there will be progress". Participation is essentially a 'learning by doing' exercise, where plans and action take place. This step-by-step process is often understood as practice distinguished from theory. Practice and, hence, participation are then a continuous educational process.

Frik de Beer (1996: 69) makes an important distinction between participation as *involvement* (system maintaining) and participation as *empowerment* (system transforming). Participation as involvement refers to the mobilisation of communities to participate or be involved in the execution of development plans and projects determined by means of top-down decision making. Involvement is about the idea of making communities or groups realise the benefits of becoming part of a development project or programme predetermined by an outside agency; thus, it is about the mobilisation (or co-operation) of people to actions not initiated by them. In such a case the emphasis on participation will be based on institutional initiatives, with government and aid agencies identifying these needs, planning action, managing projects and mobilising communities or groups to become involved. Because outsiders will determine the needs and do the planning and management, this emphasis in participation will lead to the failure of participatory involvement as a development approach. Where participation is seen as empowerment, or a system-transforming process, factors like education, meetings, agency planning, etc., come into play in the development process. This approach is linked to

decentralising control and decision-making to civil society and is, according to de Beer, valid in South Africa. In South Africa, participation was central to the democratic struggle, in both the union and community sectors. Participation was also central to the letter and spirit of the RDP Base document, where community participation was introduced as one of the key activities of developmental local government. The rhetoric in the RDP White Paper indicates that development in the new South Africa is focused primarily on actively involving people and communities, thereby empowering them. This is what Frik de Beer names 'a system-transforming process', which is clearly shown in the RDP White Paper, which states, "Development is not about delivering of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment" (ANC, 1994: 5). Even if the South African approach to development emphasises the primary development resource as the creative initiative of people, it also requires assistance from outside communities for the likes of skills and organisational training, credit, income-generating schemes, appropriate technology and access to basic services. This then implies the decentralisation of decision-making processes, with decision-making truly being returned to the people (De Beer, 1996: 69-70).

2.3 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND THE STATE

It has been argued in the development literature that people-centred or human-driven development is not possible without *community participation* and *a strong state*. A strong state should, in this sense, not be top-heavy with an arrogant and cumbersome bureaucracy; it should rather be an agile and responsive state, accountable to its citizens. Such a state should rest on the strong support of an inclusive democracy¹³ in which the power to manage problems best has been devolved from local units of governance and given to the people themselves, organised within their own communities. Any other route will reinforce a statism, which will narrow the scope of community participation (Friedman, 1992: 35; Turok, 1999: 104).

¹³ Inclusive democracy expresses democracy in terms of direct political democracy, economic democracy (beyond the confines of the market economy and state planning), as well as democracy in the social realm, and ecological democracy. The concept of inclusive democracy is derived from a synthesis of two major historical traditions: the classical definition of democracy and the socialist, although it also encompasses radical green, feminist, and liberation movements in the south. In short, inclusive democracy is a form of social organisation which re-integrates society with economy, politics and nature (Fotopoulos, 2001).

2.3.1 THE DEVELOPMENTAL POST-APARTHEID STATE

Conceptions such as the *developmental state*, the *new democratic state* and the *national democratic state* have been frequently used in discussions about the role of the new South Africa's state (Greenstein et al., 1998). The idea of an implicit developmental state can be drawn back to previous theories and approaches within both development theory and policy. Theorists such as Friedrich List and Karl Marx interpreted the notion of the developmental state as 'rudimentary' and 'autonomous'. European Marxists, such as Poulantzas, later developed Marx's idea of the autonomous capitalistic state. In the 1930s and beyond, the term 'developmental state' was mainly used within colonial welfare and development policies of some imperial powers (Leftwich, 1995: 401-402). From the 1960s onward, theorists with roots in positivism used the term in accordance with post-colonial states, which refers to the previous colonies in the Third World. Since these countries often lack markets, state intervention and planning became a necessity in relation to augmenting and marshalling the investable resources. Thus, the prime role of the state was that of an investment planner. It was further taken for granted that in these less developed countries the state should be the prime driver in economic development. (Lauridsen, 1991: 108-109). According to dependency scholars, a strong state was also seen as a part of the solution to the problems of underdevelopment. The central argument of the dependency theory was that socio-economic dependence generated underdevelopment. This happened because of long-term trends in trade, which favoured the centres for the balance of economic and political power within the centres. Peripheral countries were generally considered to have a weak national bourgeoisie and a weak working class. In order to escape from dependence and move towards a more self-reliant development pattern, a strong national state was needed (Burkey, 1993: 28, Lauridsen, 1991: 110).

Adrian Leftwich (1995: 403) criticises the previous notions about the developmental state for failing to analyse and fully engage with the political determinants of state autonomy and capacity. Developmental states should, according to him, be understood politically. Hence, he emphasises the developmental state as a distinct, but changing, sub-type of state in the modern world, which is dominated by strong nationalist developmental elites and combines varying degrees of repression and legitimacy in contexts where civil society has been or is

weakened. These states are found in Islamic and Buddhist Southeast Asia as well as in Africa and, historically, in Europe. He also criticises developmental states for not following either the Marxist or Weberian traditions of state theory, and for not being static¹⁴. Finally, he argues that the forms and features of developmental states illustrate the primacy of politics at all points of analytical entry. Their origin is clearly and easily traceable to the socio-economic structures, histories and political struggles especially, that constituted the formative processes of these states (Ibid: 420-421).

When a democratically elected government came to power in South Africa in 1994, expectations began to flourish about the new government's ability to take on further tasks and commitments. A general thought was that the new state should deliver what the top-down apartheid policy had denied the mass of the population and, thus, lead the country into a process of empowerment and reconstruction of the socio-economic life of the people. This thinking was also implemented in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP):

"Reconstruction and development will be achieved through the leading and enabling role of the state, a thriving private sector, and an active involvement by all sectors of civil society which in combination will lead to sustainable growth"
(ANC, 1994: 78-79).

Such thinking emphasised the fact that the transformation of conditions in South Africa requires a strong *developmental state* that is totally interactive with civil society and accountable to it, with both state and society contributing to the creation of a people-centred and people-driven democracy (Greenstein, Heinrich and Naidoo, 1998; Turok, 1999: 55). However, after nine years of South Africa's transition towards a democratic government, it has been argued by both social scientists and economists that the ANC has failed to implement a truly developmental state. According to Terreblanche (2002: 450), the new government did not identify the building of the capacity of the public sector as a priority from 1994 onwards. This debate will be further discussed in the two next chapters.

¹⁴ Changes in the state's socio-economic structure, its politics and international environment have produced shifts in its elite coalitions and the ideas, interests and institutions that bear on it, both domestically and internationally (Leftwich, 1995: 421).

2.4 LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Looking back over the last four decades there appears to have been a series of clear shifts in the interpretations of development, participation and the state, at both an international level and in South Africa. The development field has been exposed to new definitions of what development should entail and what kind of goals should be reached. There exists a variety of approaches and theories relating to development, as development has never been static or clear-cut. For this reason, we will never find one fixed and final definition. However, as we have seen above, recent trends in development thinking are characterised by the growing interest in the relationship between development and social transformation that took place in the 1980s. The main focus, however, has been on how to benefit the poor and disadvantaged through development processes. Further, the understanding of development and participation in South Africa as ‘people-centred development’ and ‘participatory development’ builds on earlier waves of enthusiasm about development, which brought renewed efforts to enlist people in participatory processes. It seems clear that the end of apartheid opened South Africa to a host of development purveyors. Development agencies and consultants started to emphasise community participation and an active developmental state as the most important factors in the development process. Yet, despite government’s longstanding promises about building a strong developmental state capable of tackling poverty, unemployment and underdevelopment (ANC Today, Feb. 2003), the next two chapters will address the changes in national development policies which have, instead, led to limited opportunities for community participation.

CHAPTER THREE:

PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND THE RDP

Until 1994, the South African government was notorious for its authoritarian, top-down and non-consultative development approach, which excluded the black and poor majority. State-driven development sacrificed notions of human development as essential components of development, and viewed development purely in technocratic and economic terms. In order to address the apartheid backlog of participation, participative forums were set up during the 1990s to discuss, debate and prepare for every aspect of governance. Then, as the outline of the RDP emerged, it highlighted the importance of the delivery of basic needs in the context of the transformation of the state and society to uplift the social and moral fabric of society as a whole. Hence, a new period of community-driven and people-focused development was inaugurated. The RDP was said to be a people-driven process as it referred to participation of civil society and stressed the participation of the majority in the process of development. Development is not just about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry, but should instead be people-driven; it should include 'all major stakeholders' in formulating and implementing the RDP development projects (Klandermans et al., 2001: 18; Roodt in Coetzee and Graaff, 1996: 317; Turok, 1999: 7; Wetmore and Theron, 1998). The notion of a more participatory form of democracy was captured in the RDP, which Frik de Beer (1996) came to characterise as a programme that emphasised empowerment rather than involvement¹⁵. Thus, the idea was that people at grassroots level were the local experts in development projects.

This chapter takes a closer look at the RDP and its participatory development ideals, and aims to show why the RDP was introduced and why it was later 'rejected'. It is, indeed, important to understand the intentions behind the RDP before we can move on to investigate the GEAR strategy.

¹⁵ Frik de Beer's distinction between the empowerment approach and the involvement approach is discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.3.1.1.).

3.1 THE RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (RDP)

The RDP was generated within the ANC-led alliance as a policy document to guide the movement into the 1994 elections and beyond. It spelled out the economic and social agenda for the next five years, up to the 1999 elections, and attempted to integrate growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution in a unified programme (Lundahl, 1999: 93; Turok, 1999: 53). The RDP had its origins in civil society, specifically in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African National Civics Organisations (SANCO), and was released by the tripartite alliance - comprising the ANC, COSATU and the SACP (South African Communist Party) - just before the 1994 elections. Hence, it was a product of decades-long grassroots and community struggles and, to a large extent, continued in the tradition of the 1955 Freedom Charter¹⁶. The RDP may be viewed in the light of international changes remodelling the role of national governments, as well as national changes. In both instances there was a trend towards a more open and democratic government (Bond, 1996; Abbott, 1996: 45). The thrust of this approach was to bring governance closer to the people, mainly by expanding the role of the local authorities in terms of delivering basic services, and spreading the responsibility for the distribution of public resources across both civil society organisations and state institutions (Munro, 1996: 8).

3.1.1 THE PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACH OF THE RDP

The RDP Base Document (referred to as the RDP document) and the RDP White Paper, launched in 1994, both emphasised the importance of creating a participatory development strategy and a type of development that was people-driven.

The RDP document committed itself to the values of people-centred development, participatory democracy, and the involvement of civil society in policy formulation and implementation. It envisaged the construction of a 'strong but thin' democratic state apparatus that would redistribute wealth and ensure that organisations in civil society had every chance to exercise community and worker control over development. Along these lines,

¹⁶ The Freedom Charter of 1955 was a militant, nationalistic document, which represented the ANC's programme, through its decades of exile, in resistance to apartheid.

the programme linked reconstruction to development, and believed that investment in the development of public assets, such as roads, bridges and clinics, could be used to trigger growth (ANC, 1994: 6-7; Bond, 1996). The RDP aimed to involve non-governmental organisations, research organisations and other organisations within civil society. The entire Section Five of the RDP, *Democratising the State and Society*¹⁷, indicates clearly how the government explicitly recognised the importance of the people's involvement, through various organisations, in the development and decision-making process (ANC, 1994: 121). Within the ANC's own opinion, this inclusive approach of participation by organisations outside government was very different to the old apartheid order; indeed, it was unique in South Africa's political history. These principles, published in the RDP document, show a government policy that clearly emphasises the importance of citizens' participation through organisations of civil society; hence, community participation was theoretically introduced as one of the key approaches to transforming the working South African government and was an integral element of the overall strategy for participative governance.

Regarding the people-centred focus of the RDP, the RDP document strongly emphasises an active citizenry in development processes (ANC, 1994: 24). The ANC's reconstruction and development policies, as promoted in the early days of South Africa's democracy, point towards a democracy which is people-driven; an all-embracing effort in which development forums should bring together all major stakeholders in formulating and implementing RDP development projects. Indeed, RDP initiatives should not be a state prerogative, as organisations in civil society should be "encouraged to develop their own RDP programmes of action and campaigns within their own sectors" (ANC, 1994).

The five key programmes in the RDP Base Document all involve the local people in the decision-making process, either in meeting basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy, democratising the state and society, or implementing the RDP. The following five programmes are identified:

¹⁷ Section Five's 'Democratising the State and Society', emphasises citizens' involvement through organisations through its statement, "...social movements and CBOs are a major asset in the effort to democratise and develop our society. Attention must be given to enhancing the capacity of such formations to adapt to partially changed roles... NGOs play an important capacity-building role in regard to CBOs and the development process. NGOs have an important future role in the democratisation of our society" (ANC, 1994: 121).

- Meeting the basic needs of people, such as jobs, housing, land, water, electricity, telecommunications, transport, nutrition, environment, health care and social welfare.
- Developing human resources through education and training programmes, with special focus on women and youth.
- Building the economy and addressing economic imbalances and poverty by encouraging urban and rural development.
- Democratising the state and society, by involvement and reforming the various tiers of government, the public service and civil society.
- Bringing about the effective management of financing so that each of the above can be implemented (The Republic of South Africa, 1994: 9-10).

It is indisputable that these five guidelines point towards a strongly desirable transition from previous racial discrimination, apartheid and white political and economic supremacy, towards a new democratic, elected government.

3.1.2 DEVELOPMENTAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

With the RDP's emphasis on a developmental and interventionist state and strong civil society participation, it had already given some consideration to what 'developmental local government' would constitute. But it was the Local Government White Paper of 1998, which set out in more detail the central government's vision of developmental local government (Tapscott, 2001: 10; Van Niekerk, 2000). The White Paper on Local Government is a stepping-stone between the Constitution and the Municipal Structures and Systems Acts. The White Paper (1998: Section B: 1) identifies four interrelated characteristics of developmental local government, which should:

- Maximise social development and economic growth.
- Play an integrating and co-ordinating role.
- Democratisise development.
- Play a key role in leading and learning.

There is no doubt that local government must play a central role in any development process, as it is the sphere of government closest to the people. This is also the sphere where it is easier to involve people in decision-making on local issues, rather than in provincial and national forums. As Van Niekerk (2000) indicates:

“Local government can serve as a laboratory for participatory democracy. Participatory democracy is a cornerstone of South Africa's democracy and requires that people participate in decision-making”.

Obviously there is a need for a developmental local government in South Africa. The government itself is committed to building a strong developmental state capable of tackling poverty and joblessness. As promoted in the *Government Programme 2003*:

“A number of important initiatives are taking place this year as part of the ongoing process of transforming government and making it more accessible and responsive to the people. These include the planned development of a cadre of community development workers, which will involve placing responsive individuals on the ground at local levels. This should help in efforts to direct resources and assistance to local government, which is an underdeveloped sphere of governance” (ANC Today, Feb. 2003).

Despite these optimistic promises, one should be aware that if the local government is to fill such a developmental role, it must play an active role, located within an active state at national level and within the national service delivery framework.

3.1.3 THE DEMISE OF THE RDP

The vision of the RDP was a people-centred and people-driven strategy, which theoretically involves both an active, participative citizenry and an active, interventionist state. During its first two years, the Government of National Unity (GNU) was seriously committed to its goal of eliciting public participation in development projects, as RDP forums were established in many townships. These forums, which the new government had said were needed to facilitate

development initiatives from grassroots level, came to play an important role in initiating projects and/or attracting public participation in the planning and implementation of publicly funded initiatives. Widespread activity took place around the country, as people were looking forward to playing their part in the envisaged people-driven development process (Barborton, 1998: 4; Lodge in Klandermans et al., 2001: 19).

However great the general optimism was about the new development programme, the RDP only survived for two years in its original form as the government's policy. By 1996 it was a known fact that the RDP had not lived up to the great expectations it had created (Greenstein et al., 1998; Stewart, in Liebenberg and Stewart, 1997; Lundahl, 1999). Terreblanche (2002: 109), among others, recognised that, "The RDP was perhaps too broadly formulated, and ended up as a wish list for too many people".

The Department of Finance admitted in March 1996 that it was difficult to work with a bureaucracy unaccustomed to integrated project management, especially in the absence of democratic local government (quoted in Lundahl, 1999: 97). In June 1995, the minister responsible for the RDP implementation, Jay Naidoo, decided that the RDP office should close down at the beginning of 1996. He stated that the main factor pertaining to his decision to close the national and provincial RDP offices in March 1996, was official impatience with the notion of people-driven project implementation, which resulted in rising costs and delays due to consensual decision-making and civil society partnerships. Hence, its funding then shifted back to the Department of Finance.

According to Barborton (1998: 4), "it soon became apparent that the untransformed bureaucracy and inexperienced government did not have the capacity to respond to the enthusiasm for change on the ground". The RDP had over-estimated the commitment of government to making participatory development work, as well as the capacity of civil society organisations to take part in policy-making and delivery. The government was definitely not delivering at the pace, or the extent it had promised. For example, it promised to build about one million houses by 1999, but only 250 000 houses had been completed by the beginning of 1997. Lundahl (1999: 96) argues that the main reason for its not succeeding was simply that the administrative structure necessary for efficient spending was not yet in place. Of the R2.5 billion budgeted for 1994/1995, R1.7 billion had to be rolled over to 1995/1996, and it

seemed that 20 per cent or more of the budget for the following year would share the same fate (Ibid).

In 1995, a top-level cabinet committee was established to make recommendations for macro-economic growth. Later that same year, a government strategy emerged which was referred to as a Growth and Development Strategy (GDS). The GDS was originally developed within the RDP, motivated by the idea that the outline of the RDP should be elaborated into a long-term perspective, intended to extend well into the next century. A new macro-economic strategy of the government (Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy) was then published via the GDS in June 1996 (Lundahl, 1999: 101; Stewart, 1997: 8). With this development, the South African government clearly presented a shift in emphasis from service delivery to economic growth.

3.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Since national strategies such as the Bill of Rights, the RDP Base Document, the RDP White Paper and the White Paper on Local Government, view development as far more than the expansion of income and economic growth, it can be argued that human development and community participation have been integrated as important factors within South Africa's national development plans. But, despite such support, government resources for participation programmes have not been sufficient, nor have the ideals of community participation been adequately followed, as the administrative inefficiencies within government administration have been an obstacle to the participatory ideals. The ANC has been criticised for accepting the RDP on a rhetorical level only, and for using it mainly for electioneering purposes. In the 1994 election, the RDP helped to mobilise more than 60 per cent of the electorate behind the ANC alliance (Terreblanche, 2002: 109-110). Also, during its campaign for the 1999 election, the ANC declared that "the RDP was the only relevant detailed programme to carry South Africa to freedom and social justice" (Ibid: 112).

Although the ideology of the RDP was grounded in social-democratic welfarism, based on the ambition to redress the inequalities of the past through the provision of education, health care and social services, its targets appear to be rather ambitious and unrealistic. However, it seems

that the RDP played an enormous symbolic role among the public as it was borne out of the trenches in the struggle for freedom. Unfortunately, the RDP was not in existence long enough to lead to any significant changes and, because it ended so soon, it has been difficult to measure its quantitative achievements. GEAR, on the other hand, does not apply to the people in the same way, mainly because it comprises non-participative and neo-liberal elements. GEAR's technocratic language provides for development as a neutral economic process, devoid of crisis overtones. When South Africa introduced GEAR in 1996, many of its opponents argued that this was the proof of the ANC's neo-liberalistic reversal. Since neo-liberalism addresses everything other than the ideals of participation, as it enables the market to play the major role in social development, the participatory development approach, in this context, needs to be questioned. These concerns will, however, be further discussed in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

THE GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND REDISTRIBUTION STRATEGY (GEAR)

The closure of the RDP office in March 1996 and the subsequent introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) in June of the same year, created grounds for questioning the government's developmental role and its fulfilment of the participatory development approach as was so strongly emphasised in the RDP. This chapter aims to explain how and why GEAR came into existence and the implications it has on participatory development and community participation. It is very difficult to establish a direct link between a macro-economic policy such as GEAR, and community participation, but in attempting to do so, it is necessary to analyse the changing role of the national government. There should be no doubt that international trends such as global capitalism and neo-liberalism, have impacted on South Africa's national government's development thinking. My argument here is that neo-liberalism has led to a reduction of state intervention. Reduced state intervention could in fact leave more room for community participation, but in South Africa a process has occurred in which local government increases its sphere of control while, at the same time, national government withdraws from direct provision and increases its control over funding and resources for development and service provision to low-income communities, thereby reducing the opportunities for direct participation by the communities.

GEAR and neo-liberalism at local governmental level have meant budget constraints and accepting the principles of full cost recovery. Because of fiscal restraints there has also been a decrease in intergovernmental transfers. For instance, the Equitable Share Grant, which is the grant provided by national government to local government, declined by 85 per cent in real terms between 1991 and 1997, and declined a further 55 per cent between 1997 and 2000 (McDonald, 2000). At the same time taxes have been cut; in 2000 alone the company tax cut from 35 per cent to 30 per cent meant R3 billion extra to business. Further tax concessions to the rich in the 2000/01 budget amounted to R9,9 billion but, in the same budget, there was only R1,7 billion for local government (Wa ka Bila, 2000: 22-26). These budget constraints indicate the lack of political will to support local developmental government. The ideals of community participation as set up by the South African government can be said to have remained elusive not only because of the way in which the political process has played out since 1994, but also because the government has made unrealistic assumptions about its role

in the development process, as formed by a statist approach. James Midgley (1995: 125) writes in his book, *Social Development*, that the idea of the state as a promoter for both economic and social development forms the basis of the statist approach to development. The statist approach believes that the government is collectively owned by its citizens and represents their interests; thus, the state is the ultimate collective.

4.1 WHAT IS GEAR?

After being drawn up in rather secretive conditions¹⁸, GEAR was announced by the Ministry of Finance in June 1996. GEAR is a medium-term strategy to achieve specific targets of economic development, investment and growth, fiscal constraint, enhanced export and trade and employment creation (Goldin and Heymans in Maharaj, 1999: 112). GEAR is a macro-economic framework, which was enforced as part of a strategy towards market-oriented approaches to combat poverty and inequality. It has defined its main priorities as “creating jobs, reducing the deficit, facilitating a labour market organised according to the principle of ‘regulated flexibility’, constraining inflation, creating a socio-political environment conducive to investment, and creating a growing and internationally competitive economy” (Department of Finance, 1996). GEAR also sets out specific targets that it plans to achieve through policies that encourage privatisation, increased investment and competition:

- An economic growth rate of 6 per cent per annum.
- The creation of more than 1,3 million new jobs outside of agriculture.
- An 11 per cent average growth in real manufactured exports.
- A 12 per cent average growth rate of real investment (Ibid).

In turn, GEAR recognises a direct link between growth and equity and calls for a focused, albeit not necessarily limited, role for the state in the economy (Goldin and Heymans in Maharaj, 1999: 112). The twin objectives of GEAR are, however, transformation of the

¹⁸ GEAR was devised by a group of 15 economists and was only shown to a small number of decision-makers in the ANC alliance before being released. Webster and Adler (1998: 367) claim that the programme was not being discussed at the formal meetings. Hence, it appears that the alliance partners (the SACP and COSATU) were never formally involved in the formulation of GEAR. Finance Minister, Trevor Manuel, declared the strategy ‘non-negotiable’ in its broad outline, although the government was willing to negotiate the details with COSATU and SACP (Marais, 2001: 162; Terreblanche, 2002: 114).

economy to meet the needs of the new democracy, and gearing it for the competitive world economy. The strategy to achieve these objectives includes infrastructure development measures (including housing, health care and education facilities, municipal and rural infrastructure, and recreational facilities); to promote competitiveness and employment; restructuring of state assets, fiscal and financial discipline and the reprioritising of spending (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

4.2 HOW GEAR CAME INTO EXISTENCE

GEAR was introduced only two years after the formal end of a regime whose economic policy sought to ensure that the benefits of growth incurred were distributed inequitably or otherwise. There are many explanations as to why GEAR came into being. South Africa's economic environment of the 1990s has been broadly used as a factor to explain the introduction of GEAR. Within this decade, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth had fallen way behind the growth of the population and labour force, thus contributing to massive unemployment and widespread poverty. Maria Ramos (1997: 37) perceives both the low growth rate and the modest formal sector job creation as unsustainable options for the economy. Similar explanations arose from the domestic economic crisis of February 1996. Together with an overvalued rand, policy concerns revolved around the poor state of the balance of payments reserves and the fact that the Reserve Bank was less inclined to lower interest rates (Masiza, 2001: 90). Two government meetings about South Africa's difficult economic situation actually took place prior to the crisis (in December 1995 and January 1996), with the aim to discuss and decide which economic experts to invite to help formulate a new macro-economic strategy to prevent future crises from destabilising the country's economy (Ibid). One should note, however, that the RDP office, which at this stage was working on the National Growth and Development Strategy (NGDS), was not invited to those meetings. It was offered varying explanations about its absence; one of the coordinators of this process and consultant to the Deputy Minister of Finance, Iraj Abedian, said that the RDP office was not invited because it had no economists. Guy Mhone, representing the Department of Labour said, on the other hand, that he believes the RDP office was sidelined because its thinking was in stark contrast to the IMF and World bank philosophy of restrictive

fiscal policy¹⁹ (Ibid: 91). The fact that two World Bank economists joined the group of experts at the February 1996 meeting brings us to the critics who accuse GEAR of being imposed by the IMF and the World Bank's policies, and thus being a neo-liberal strategy. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Other scholars describe GEAR as the outcome of events taking place on the international front. Due to the increasingly market-oriented nature of the world economies and a fluctuating and uncertain financial climate, GEAR was, according to Heintz (1997: 31), a necessary stabilisation strategy to attract investment and boost economic growth. Indeed, GEAR was initiated at a time when the value of the rand was falling rapidly and the stocks of foreign exchange were at a dangerously low level. Furthermore, increased inflation in the world market could make South African goods and services less competitive (Ibid). It is, however, important to note that GEAR was introduced in the globalisation age, i.e. at the time when globalisation emerged as the driving force in world politics. Globalisation represents pressure on the government, because if a government's policies are not in accordance with international standards, this may lead to a loss of market shares in the world. The globalisation of financial markets has made it harder for national government to control monetary and fiscal policy. Hence, GEAR is understood by some scholars as an attempt to adjust to 'the world out there' (Webster and Adler, 1998: 349-350).

4.3 COMPARING THE RDP AND GEAR

When comparing the RDP of 1994 with the GEAR strategy of 1996, the most important difference between the two is that the former expected the state to conduct a people-oriented development policy, while the latter saw South Africa's economic 'salvation' in the high economic growth rate that would result from a sharp increase in private capital accumulation in an unbridled capitalist system (Terreblanche, 2002: 116). Although GEAR has been perceived to replace the RDP, the ANC argues that GEAR works parallel to the RDP and is more of an extension of the first development policy than a replacement thereof. Despite its new macro-economic framework for rebuilding and restructuring the economy, the ANC

¹⁹ These arguments about the RDP office's absence at the financial meetings were extracted from research done by the Center for Policy Studies (CPS) on the introduction of GEAR, where people who formulated the GEAR strategy were interviewed.

claims that it does not aim to challenge the 'old' economical framework; it could "successfully confront the related challenges of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, increasing participation in the democratic institution of civil society and implementing the RDP in all its facets". Thus, it promises to continue with the people-centred development approach of the RDP in the context of macro-economic discipline and stability (Department of Finance, 1996). Accordingly, the ANC argues that the implementation and adoption of the RDP policies is still an ongoing project. Despite the ANC's obstinacy in all respects, when reading the GEAR document one will find only a few references to the RDP. Although the whole of Chapter Six refers to social and sectoral development in the form of education, health and welfare, housing, land reform and infrastructure, the message is quite different from the RDP, as it boils down to economic growth and employment creation. So even if the government argues that it tries to follow a developmental framework, there can be no doubt that GEAR is situated outside of a developmental context. Thus, I would like to argue that a social-development programme, such as the RDP, could not, in fact, be integrated with a macro-economic and neo-liberal strategy. Hence, the introduction of GEAR signals a changing role of national government and a U-turn away from what the ANC expressed during the struggle. Adelzadeh (1996) has labelled this shift of policy as the "ANC's gradual embrace of neo-liberalism", while Marais (1997) writes that:

"The RDP's original character and logic have been overwritten by an overall economic strategy which adheres to the contours of neo-liberal orthodoxy and fortifies social inequality".

4.3.1 THE ROLE OF THE STATE AND NEO-LIBERALISM

This thesis has already argued that developmentalism refers to an active and interventionist state, as was the focus of both the RDP and the White Paper on Local Government. GEAR, however, shows a shift of the government's developmental rhetoric from popular participation to the rolling out of mass programmes. Hence, it can be criticised to have created a more conservative 'trickle down' approach to poverty alleviation than the previous 'growth through redistribution' orientation of the RDP.

Swatuk (1998: 3) has identified two significant and incompatible problems that the post-apartheid government faces: on the one hand, the ANC faces widespread, popular, domestic pressure for democratisation and social and economic development. Such pressure demands commitment of to state intervention and redistribution of resources. On the other hand, it receives overwhelming pressure from global and national capitals to liberate the economy, pursue export-oriented niche development, and practice careful money management. Such pressure and demands suggest a policy of minimal state intervention in both developmental and economic concerns. Contemporary theorists and social scientists have argued that domestic pressure had to give way to international pressure, especially from the IMF and the World Bank. The introduction of GEAR has often been used as evidence of the above. The new strategy is seen as an example of an existing international trend and pressure for the state to play a minimalist, managerial role in development. It is a neo-liberal vehicle, which seeks to reduce state control over the national economy in favour of private capitalism – the so-called ‘free market’. Neo-liberalistic thinking sees the state as fundamentally inefficient when it comes to service delivery, and state spending as a disincentive to private sector investment.

Acknowledging the state’s limitations to achieve delivery on its own, GEAR presents a strong case for more efficient investment and development through public/private partnerships (Goldin and Heymans in Maharaj, 1999: 112). It is argued by Terreblanche (1999: 86) that GEAR envisages the world economy as an integrated capitalist system where market forces have authority and deservedly punish countries that do not follow the written code of ‘sound’ fiscal, monetary and labour market policies. He further claims that the core content of the GEAR document reflects the recent anti-state sentiments, which are popular in new right-wing circles in several liberal, capitalist countries. Furthermore, he believes that an anti-state orientation runs “like a golden thread through the GEAR document” (Terreblanche, 1999: 86). This strong anti-state orientation was started by the Reagan/Thatcher swing to the ideological right, indicated a general trend and international pressure for the state to play a minimalist, managerial role. Neo-liberalism as an approach to the state involves, among other factors:

- Removing the state from direct service delivery/provision of services.
- Cutting the size of the state/public sectors.

- Cutting the state budget, which means cutting spending in the public sector and in welfare areas (Van Niekerk, 2000).

Neo-liberalism evidently views the state as being fundamentally inefficient when it comes to service delivery, and state spending as a disincentive to private sector investment. However, one should bear in mind that anti-state attitudes in new liberal countries only try to 'roll-back' state involvement in the economy, without breaking down state capacity, which then remains well developed and well institutionalised. Terreblanche (1999: 88) observes that this is not yet the case in South Africa. South Africa is still in a phase of the transformation process in which the state needs to reinvent and re-establish itself in important aspects to ensure that the necessary discipline and order are maintained not only in the public sector, but also in society at large. Unlike the northern countries, the level of state control in service provision to low-income communities in South Africa has increased with the growing legitimacy of the state. Thus, the role of the private and semi-private sectors has declined (Lyons et al., 2001: 286).

Together with its neo-liberal framework, the GEAR document also shows a strong understanding of globalisation. Unlike the RDP, which was at least cloaked in the language of redistribution and social welfare, GEAR is seen to be an externally-motivated document (Tapscott and Thompson, 1998: 19). The GEAR document states on its first page that "Sustained growth on a higher plane(sic) requires a transformation towards a competitive outward-orientated economy" (Department of Finance, 1996: 1). The way in which this should be achieved is through classical neo-liberal strategies, as recommended by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS: GEAR AS AN OBSTACLE TO PARTICIPATION?

A common criticism against GEAR has been that the strategy is more concerned with economic growth than with people, and that GEAR is far removed from the lives of ordinary people as it was drawn up by technocrats and economic experts, according to David Korten (1990: 67):

"Growth-centred development puts economic growth ahead of people and the ecology on which their well-being depends".

The government's aim of increasing economic growth by 4,2 per cent from 1996 to 2000 requires, among other cutbacks, a cut in the overall budget deficit and the level of government dissaving (Department of Finance, 1996). Cutting of the budget deficit will, in all likelihood, restrict reconstruction and development activities. Hence, with the introduction of GEAR, social services were to be cut back and financed by re-allocating expenditure within the current budget constraints. The GEAR report argues that much higher economic growth rates are necessary to achieve these social objectives. Sustained growth on this higher plane (6 per cent and 400 000 new jobs per year) requires transformation towards an outward-oriented economy centred on a "competitive platform for a powerful expansion by the tradable goods sector, within a stable environment for confidence, and with a profitable surge in private investment and flexibility within the collective bargaining system" (Department of Finance, 1996: 2).

One problem with GEAR is that it places economic growth at the heart of the development policy. While the RDP emphasises growth as a result of redistributive investment in infrastructure and human resources, GEAR emphasises growth as a necessity for redistribution (ANC, 1994: 6; Department of Finance, 1996). Within a theoretical context, it is argued in this chapter that the most important difference between the RDP and GEAR is that whilst the former expected the state to conduct a people-oriented developmental policy, i.e. the new government was supposed to play an active role in both the economy and development projects, to give these spheres new structures and directions, the latter believes that private investment and high economic growth will 'trickle down' to the grassroots and, in this manner, promote employment, redistribution and development. But based on international and national experiences, we should know that 'trickle down' does not happen. In fact, neo-liberal thinking in South Africa has increased income inequalities. Today, South Africa and Brazil have the most unequal distribution of income in the world. According to a five-year income and expenditure survey by Statistics South Africa (SSA), the average household in South Africa had less buying power in 2000 than it did in 1995. Studies by SSA (2002) suggest that the poor in South Africa have never been poorer. SSA divides the population into five categories, ranging from highest to lowest income groups, each representing 20 per cent, or a quintile. The highest or most wealthy segment is Quintile One (Q1), the lowest, Quintile Five (Q5). The average spend by households on food as a

percentage in Q5 for 1995 was 50 per cent, whereas for 2000 it was 57 per cent. For Q4, in 1995, 41 per cent was spent on food, whilst in 2000, 52 per cent was spent on food (SSA, 2002). All quintiles spent a comparatively higher share on food in more recent years. High food prices have an especially high impact on the poorest communities or lowest quintiles. These findings support the view that the poor in South Africa have become even poorer. Another problem with GEAR is that it focuses strongly on the pursuit of profit, and fails to put a human face to the reconstruction process. Critics, particularly from the left wing, claim that GEAR works pragmatically towards the realisation of the RDP in the long term. Accordingly, the introduction of GEAR has led to a broad ideological shift to the right in South Africa, and a drastic shift from a people-centred to a market-oriented development policy.

Since GEAR is premised on the state playing a regulating, enabling role, reducing the budget deficit, cutting back on state spending and reducing the size of the public sector, the amount of money available to local government from the national fiscus is apparently minimised. Since 1994, the equitable share going to local government has declined by approximately 85 per cent; this at a time when unemployment is growing and the effects of poverty are increasingly stark (Van Niekerk, 2000). Thus, the local government faces difficulties when trying to adopt a developmental role. Indeed, GEAR can be described as an expression of international neo-liberal trends or, in other words, what Peter Stewart (1997: 9) characterises as “a risky experiment with neo-liberal economics”. GEAR can be seen as an indication of a new approach to development, which is authoritarian and top-down. Within less than a decade, the South African state has moved away from a development approach that emphasised development initiatives from grassroots level and ‘ad hoc’ projects from below, towards an increasing bureaucratisation of development work. It is argued in this thesis that state-managed development has taken place despite the fact that central government is no longer involved in direct provision, as a result of decentralisation of delivery and management to a local level. In such a case, central state involvement is merely less visible, and consists largely of defining standards and programmes. I, therefore, agree with the theoreticians who argue that development today is a far more state-centred process than it used to be. Lyons, Smuts and Stephens (2001: 283) have named the period from 1997-onwards ‘engaging with state bureaucracy’ According to them, this phase is characterised by the policy and institutional restructuring which has coincided with the replacement of the RDP by GEAR as

the official development policy. Elected councillors formulate programmes in consultation with local forums and professional officers. Programme funds are then bid for by local communities and drawn down against certified completion targets. In new state-financed development, communities participate in decision making at various stages, but frameworks established by the state for each stage of the process define their sphere of influence (Ibid).

On the basis of the abovementioned arguments, it should be clear that within less than a decade, the South African government has gradually moved away from what Frik de Beer, in 1996, named 'the empowerment approach', achieved during a period characterised by national struggle for social justice and the empowerment of local people. The reality of today is distinguished as a situation where the national government has cut down on social spending and increased its control over development resources. Local government receives less money for community-based development projects. Thus, I will argue that there exists a lack of political will to support local developmental government.

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CHAPTER FIVE:

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE

Different interpretations can easily be assumed about community participation and participatory development, simply by reading and comparing the RDP and GEAR documents, and by reviewing them in external and internal contexts. However, one clearly needs to add some empirical facts to the discussion to make it valid and reliable. Moving on to look at participation in practice, this chapter reviews a contemporary research project on participation in community-based development projects in South Africa. The research project²⁰ was done by Michael Lyons, Carin Smuts and Anthea Stephens and lasted for two years from February 1998. By using the data collected by the research team, this chapter intends to show how the end of apartheid set a process of development policy changes in motion and how people on the ground have been affected. My aims are to illustrate the nature of community participation in South Africa and to demonstrate the obstacles that development projects have met since the introduction of GEAR. However, it should be noted that the arguments in this chapter are not valid for all development projects in South Africa, as participation and development are very difficult to measure and require the use of both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators in conjunction with each other.

The purpose of this chapter is to link the case studies – generally to the literature review on community participation and, particularly, to the RDP/GEAR debate. Considerable attention will be paid to the extent of influence and control over the projects, as well as changes in the funding structure.

5.1 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research team investigated 15 community-based development projects, all of which originated more than ten years prior to the RDP, and which continued to develop and change after the GEAR strategy was introduced. The projects were located in the three main metropolitan areas of South Africa, namely, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. The

²⁰ The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded the research project 'Community Agency in the Development Process'.

focus of the research was on urban development projects involving the provision of public amenity buildings²¹, which aim to address socio-economic imbalances. All projects selected have in common a partnership involving the community, local government, funders (from both public and private sources), consultants and, to a lesser degree, the central state (Lyons et al., 2001a: 1238-1239). The data collected was mainly qualitative, which means it came from:

- evaluating workshops,
- interviews with key informants,
- household interviewing.

Ward level data from the 1996 census covered a range of basic socio-economic variables, and was used to quantify structural problems in the communities (Ibid, 1999 and 2001b).

As already mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, there are several advantages in studying projects within the built environment, as the projects within this sphere usually continue and develop over a long period, and such projects tend to mostly involve a multi-dimensional partnership as described above. It will only be possible to achieve the necessary fit between the programme and its beneficiaries by involving the community members in built programmes, decision-making, evaluation and implementation. Thus, it will be easier for the researchers to analyse the enabling process, and to investigate the relationship between the grassroots level, local government and the state. However, it must be noted that there are many factors which may influence the development process, but that a completed development project can be termed 'successful' even if community participation and/or empowerment is absent. A 'successful, completed project' is defined by the research team as the successful completion of a project brief, where successful management of the programme and operation of the project has taken place. It should serve the needs of the community and its intended purpose (Ibid, 2001a: 1238). Another important factor is that both communities and local conditions differ from city to city and that factors such as institutional structure, local conflicts, power sharing and power distribution, poverty, etc., may influence the community project's responses to a changing policy framework. Although the case studies

²¹ Schools, community halls, libraries, training centres, utility payment centres, management offices, markets, etc., are some examples of local amenities examined in the research study.

reviewed are not and cannot be valid for all the existing and similar projects in South Africa, they will, because of their extensive dimension, give us a good indication of the difficult situations that poor communities are facing.

I consider the research reviewed to be useful and valid for the following reasons:

- The researchers have investigated projects that are organised along different political lines (autocratic versus democratic).
- The projects vary in their ability to sustain the gains made through the development process.
- Different institutional restructuring took place within the development process.
- The three metropolitan areas deal with diverse cultural and physical contexts (community structure).

In addition, the data on each project covers a multi-dimensional view of that project, including the full history of the management of the project cycle(s), the extent of participation at various times, people's reasons for participation and non-participation, as well as a broader picture of local political, cultural and economic conditions (Lyons et al., 2001a: 1238). A weakness that I find within the research is that it does not quantify participation due to the research team being more interested in the decision-making process and in the openness of the system to new entrants. The total number of participants is not of great importance to the researchers, as different people are involved at different stages in the development process. When large numbers of people are involved in one project over a long period, it is difficult to measure exactly how many participate, who participates and the reasons that they participate.

Lyons et al. have investigated the project within three phases; the later stage of apartheid (1984-1993), the later stage of apartheid and the early days of post-apartheid government (1991-1996), and the replacement period, where the RDP gave land to GEAR (1997-1999).

Since the focus of this thesis is on community participation in the post-apartheid era, I will look mainly at the research within the RDP period (1994-1996) and the GEAR period (1996-onwards). The discussion in this chapter is concentrated around two of the fifteen case studies, which were examined by the researcher team, namely, Bester's Camp in Inanda,

Durban and Gugulethu Central Meat Market in Cape Town. I selected these two projects because they were the two I had the most information about. They are also long-term projects which have been active over a period of fifteen years and which share a background of adversity, in the face of which they formulated agreements over issues and initial priorities.

5.1.2 BESTER'S CAMP, INANDA, DURBAN

Inanda is one of the major townships located on the periphery of the Durban Metropolitan Area (DMA) in KwaZulu Natal (KZN). In 1990 the provincial government in Durban initiated the Bester's Camp project in Inanda. The objective of the community-led project in Bester's Camp was to provide amenities (library, primary school, community hall, training centre, utility payment centre and a management office) in the recently resettled, informal township of Inanda. In support of the projects, R10 million was granted by Tongaat Hulett, the National Public Works Programme (funding only the primary school) and the Independent Development Trust (IDT). Subsidies were given by the Provincial Education Department, the City of Durban Library Services and the Electricity Supply Commission (Escom) (Lyons et al., 2001b: 282 and 2002: 203).

The DMA, which is the economic driver in KZN, is one of South Africa's largest urban areas, and one of the fastest growing cities in the world. However, despite its large and diversified economy, with its strong manufacturing, tourism, transportation, finance and government sectors, there has been little growth in the number of jobs within the formal sector. The informal sector, on the other hand, is growing enormously. Accordingly, the DMA has an unemployment rate reaching over 30 per cent in some areas of the city. By comparison, the unemployment rate in Bester's Camp in 1996 was 47,7 per cent (Lyons et al., 2002: 201-205; The SOE Report, 1999).

Inanda was settled predominantly during the mid-1980s when a large number of rural-urban migrants established informal settlements in the area, as close to Durban as apartheid restrictions allowed. Ethnic and political strife forced the migration of Indians from Inanda in 1992. The Bester's Camp community remained on this contested land and consolidated its settlement from 1992 onwards (Lyons et al., 2002: 201). Bester's Camp is described as a physically isolated community, with long distances to travel, poor roads, poor public transport

and few car owners. Owing to these factors, frequent commuting to the city centre and regular contact with other communities is prevented. It is notable that the formalisation of democratic power struggles in Inanda took place during the RDP period, and were well established by the time they were enshrined in institutional policy, following the introduction of GEAR. They may, therefore, be said to have developed alongside, rather than as a consequence of, policy changes (Lyons et al., 2002: 201-205). In 1990 the provincial government appointed the Urban Foundation's Informal Settlement unit, to ameliorate housing conditions in Inanda. Two years later the Urban Foundation (UF), a development trust for Inanda, was deemed eligible to bid for development funds to the Independent Development Trust (IDT)²². Its remit was expanded to include a service centre at Bester's Camp for this community of approximately 50 000 residents living within immediate proximity of the site. A master development plan was formulated for Bester's Camp that same year. Project developments included a library, a school, a community hall and workshops, on a large site recently vacated by a construction company and donated by a major business interest. At the same time, large-scale shelter upgrading was being carried out in the area, also initiated by the UF (Ibid, 1999: 13). Although the plans were developed in consultation with local residents, enormous resentment arose from what was seen by locals as the imposition of planning decisions and a management structure by outsiders, who were tarnished by their association with the Nationalist government. In 1993 the local pyramidal political structure, developed by SANCO (the national movement of civic associations), took effective control of the township and for a period of several months, all work ceased.

In the period leading up to and immediately after the institution of the RDP, there was an enormous surge of hope and grassroots activity in Bester's Camp, which was further accompanied by a burgeoning of participation and major achievement. For instance, in 1993/1994, the local people revolted against the existing development trust, the UF, which was appointed by the provincial government in 1990. After a period of several months of boycotts and resentment against the UF, it withdrew from Bester's Camp well before its

²² The IDT was established in 1990 by the national government. The organisation established major development programmes, in which a participatory development approach was used to provide public amenity buildings in low-income areas. Its original mandate was to disburse a grant of R2 billion in a manner which would best serve the development of disadvantaged communities in South Africa. Between 1990 and 1998 the IDT spent R2,8 billion on around 8,800 development projects (IDT, 2003). However, after 1998, the IDT recognised that it would no longer be a channel for direct delivery of services to communities. Thus, it prefers to conduit funds through smaller development bodies and agencies, and it will further be necessary to review the extent and quality of community participation (Lyons et al., 1999: 8-9).

planned time. The locally established Inanda Community Development Trust (ICDT) then replaced the UF. Only four of ICDT's members were not local residents. A well-structured, area-based reporting and consultation structure supported the ICDT and governed the appointment of its members. The ICDT now became the landlord of various advanced planning phases. The ICDT appointed an executive director to manage rent collection, supervise the site, and negotiate with external agents. In 1995 the ICDT was still largely influenced by its traditional representative structure, funded independently by NGOs, and it regarded the council as a service provider. Bester's Camp's school, library and hall were designed in close consultation with the ICDT and the broader public and service providers, eg the Library Services Department of the Durban Metropolitan Council took occupation as tenants of the ICDT (Ibid, 1999: 13-15).

Through the aid of community participation and led by the ICDT, the school, library, community hall, training centre and utility payment centre were completed in 1996, and in 1997 sub-committees were formed to deal with each facility. The school in Bester's Camp was fully utilised and, according to the headmaster, Mr. Nkosi, who was interviewed by the research team, plans were in place to expand its computer department and to develop joint activity programmes in conjunction with the library, although a number of serious strategic and operational concerns were voiced (Ibid, 2002: 206). Although the buildings were completed successfully, high costs would later threaten the management of these projects, especially the community hall. The community hall in Bester's Camp was eventually taken over by the municipality in 1998/1999 and as its running costs were constantly increasing, the residents in Bester's Camp experienced limited control of the community hall. One could say that the outcome of this was improved predictability at the cost of community participation.

5.1.3 GUGULETHU CENTRAL MEAT MARKET, CAPE TOWN

Gugulethu is situated about twenty kilometres from Cape Town and is one of the oldest black townships in South Africa. Gugulethu Central Meat Market was initiated in 1985 by an elected committee, to address the prevailing situation of the police persecuting meat and beer traders on the streets of Gugulethu. The traders were forced to look at their mutual position and find a solution to the situation so, during 1985 the elected committee (consisting of street traders) centralised their activities on some open land provided by the Mayor of Gugulethu,

which was close to hostels controlled by Umzamo (a locally-based NGO, dedicated to the improvement of the hostel dwellers nearby). The traders then operated more as a community, rather than a group of individuals. The intention behind the establishment of Gugulethu Central Meat Market was to shelter the meat market that was successfully operating on open ground. The project was funded by a R1, 7 million contribution from the Electricity Supply Commission (Escom), the British High Commission and the Reconstruction and Development Programme for the City of Cape Town. Loans were given from DBSA (Ibid, 1999: 13-14; 2001b: 282).

Gugulethu originated in 1958 as Nyanga West. It was established as a result of the migrant labour system and is located within traditional single-male hostels and informal structures, where traders requested protection from the elements. Poverty, oppression and overcrowding characterised life in Gugulethu under the apartheid rule. The schools were ill-equipped and under-funded. Housing lacked both electricity and proper plumbing right up until the 1980s²³.

In 1985 the street traders in Gugulethu elected a committee and chairperson to consider their collective needs after the pressure and harassment from the police. The harassment continued and a system of early warning and mutual assistance developed into the kernel of plans for a market. However, formulating a development agenda and an institutional structure, entirely from within the traders' community, was not possible in the highly politicised climate of the times. Umzamo took up the Gugulethu Central Meat Market in Cape Town in 1991, which then joined the steering committee and encouraged the initial attempts to formalise the activities of a busy local meat market. The project was completed in 1997 when the local municipality agreed to supply an ablution block. The research team describe Gugulethu Central Meat Market as a successful project since committee members became trained in a range of management skills, while local contractors and builders were employed by the project (Lyons et al., 1999: 12-15 and 2001a: 1243).

In Gugulethu, the Umzamo, which was a non-government organisation, revived interest in fund-raising (R1 million in grants from several donors) for the Central Meat Market in 1995. This occurred after traders approached development consultants after being encouraged by Umzamo. They formed a Section 21 non-profit company and initiated twin processes of

²³ See <http://www.countryman.co.za/travel/townships/gugulethu.htm> for more information about Gugulethu.

planning and fund raising. This phase exemplifies a process in which local people, directly concerned with development, have a large measure of autonomy in formulating a planning and architectural brief, in identifying an appropriate management structure and in establishing reporting practices that validate the work of representative members. This new interest ultimately led to a struggle for control between market traders and the NGO. The funders (mainly South African Breweries) became aware of the existing struggle and delayed the release of funds for building programmes, until the executive committee was restructured to reflect both parties (Ibid, 1999: 14-15). Construction began in 1996, managed by the steering committee who reported to public meetings, and were assisted by development consultants. Members of the committee underwent training in a range of management skills, while local contractors and building workers were employed by the project. In the course of construction, spending on the project was over-extended following a misinterpretation of agreement with the DBSA (R7 million), and the project accumulated debts to suppliers and contractors. The difficulties of engaging in prolonged negotiation with the DBSA were significant for a community of this size and scope.

There are, however, some interesting differences between Gugulethu Central Meat Market and Bester's Camp. Bester's Camp was, with its strong grassroots structure, able to remain largely independent of the state in its internal affairs. For this reason it retained ownership of its assets, and maintained a relatively united front to all outside agencies, not least the local authority services. Gugulethu Central Meat Market, on the other hand, was characterised by internal rivalries, which resulted in a lack of suitable financial control. In 1997 the local municipality agreed to supply ablution blocks, to set conditions on the committee representatives and to underwrite the outstanding loan from the DBSA. The result was that local authority involvement grew and several conditions were then attached to its intervention. First of all, the steering committee was restructured to include traders, Umzamo and local authority representatives. This meant that the local authority no longer stood as a regulatory authority in relation to the community (in terms of planning and environmental health), as it might have with any other urban market and had previously been. From hereon in, it was actively involved in strategic and day-to-day management of the project and was, in addition, landlord of some of the buildings (the ablution block). Furthermore, a manager was appointed on the premise that he was a local authority employee. The construction proceeded and the building was completed under management of the newly constituted executive

committee in 1997. In 1998 the building was commissioned under the auspices of the local authority and Umzamo. The traders moved in to their new stalls, according to the plan agreed during public consultation in 1995. The market began to operate under the new steering committee, supported by the manager. Although the formalisation of trade can be said to have been successful as grocery shops and bars are paying their rents regularly (sometimes even in advance), the meat traders, on the other hand, are not meeting their own, lower rent payments. The loan repayments to the DBSA are still outstanding and, according to the research team, the local authority which has underwritten the loan, plans to take over the management of the market unless payments are substantially met and caught up with (Ibid, 1999: 15-16).

The Central Meat Market was subject to the financial and programmatic limitations of the new state culture and had lost some of its independence from the state. The introduction of GEAR in 1996 led to a growing importance for the inclusion of local or provincial government in the affairs of the development projects in South Africa. The new state-financed development paradigm implies that elected councillors, in consultation with local forum and professional officers were in charge of formulating development programmes. Consequently, programme funds were bid for by local communities and drawn down against certified completions goals (Ibid, 2001b: 283-284). With such increased local/provincial governmental power, project funding came increasingly from local government or state providers, rather than from private or semi-private funders. In Gugulethu Central Market the management structure became increasingly formalised during this period. There were local government officials in the management processes, and no strategic decisions could be taken entirely independently of local government (Ibid, 2001b: 284).

5.2 ANALYSING THE FINDINGS

Both case studies viewed above show the process of political development change in the new South Africa. The RDP period encouraged the development of buildings and services, with initiative largely taken by local residents and a small number of consultants working 'on spec', as well as NGO officials, who became involved through numerous routes. In effect, an ad hoc project structure was developed. A more formal grassroots structure generally emerged from this phase. 1996-onwards is characteristic of the policy and institutional restructuring

which has coincided with the replacement of the RDP by GEAR as the national development policy. The new state-financed development policy meant increasing the importance of local government in each project. The belief that, despite financial cutbacks, both economic growth and social welfare can be promoted through government planning has, according to Lyons et al., negatively affected all of the fifteen projects studied (Ibid, 2001b: 284).

One interesting finding from the research reviewed is that after the RDP office's funding was transferred back to the Department of Finance, funding for the development projects came increasingly from local government, or other state providers, rather than from private or semi-private funders, which was previously the case (Ibid, 2000: 17). At the same time as the national government withdrew as the arbiter of development within the local sphere, it also increased its control over financial support to local government. However, my concern in this analysis is the decrease in direct management of subsidies given by the national government to local government for development tasks, and the reason for my arguments about the extent of community participation in development projects after the introduction of GEAR. The Independent Development Trust (IDT), which was one of the financial funders in Bester's Camp, creates an interesting example of how increased governmental control over financial support has led to the restructuring and the withdrawal of major funders within the development sphere. Although local groups and communities *are* free to apply for funds independently of the local authority, they might find it difficult to apply for money from outside for two specific reasons; first, there are not many funders to choose from; secondly, most of the funders are nowadays operating as facilitators instead of independent individuals. As the community refuses to apply for financial support, the citizens will be forced to be dependent on local governmental funding, which is not an enticing solution, as the central government's funding to local government has decreased enormously over the last decade. Van Niekerk (2000) indicates that since 1994 the reasonable share going to local government has declined by approximately 85 per cent. Such a decline demonstrates the difficulties that both the community and the local government meet within the development sphere. Limited funding makes it hard for local governments to meet the demands of the poor and to address the promotion of community participation or, in other words, to be able to fulfil its developmental role, as was the vision of the Local Government White Paper of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998). Communities' dependence, which follows the withdrawal

of non-government funders, makes it impossible for the local people to be in charge of development projects within the community.

The community hall in Bester's Camp was completed in 1997 through community participation, but in 1998/1999 it was taken over by the municipality because of the withdrawal of direct management of state subsidy monies from the community domain. This shift of management and subsidies resulted in a situation where the municipality obstructed the community's ability to move on and engage in further development. Because of the high costs and the changes in management structure, the residents lost control and responsibility of the hall (Ibid, 2002: 196; 208). I would like to argue that when communities lose their chances to participate in a satisfactory manner, as happened with the community hall in 1998/1999, their opportunities to increase their self-reliance will also be diminished. Self-reliance, according to Stan Burkey, is based on peoples' feelings of contribution and involvement. As he writes in his book, *People First, A Guide to Self-Reliant, Participatory Rural Development* (1996: 50):

"People should feel and believe that it is their own efforts that are driving the development process, that they themselves are contributing to the maximum of their own human, financial and material resources, and that assistance from outside is only for what they cannot yet manage themselves".

Burkey emphasises self-reliance as an absolute necessity for people who want to fight their way up from poverty. However, it takes time to become self-reliant, as self-reliance requires a certain degree of knowledge and skills. When people are *not* self-reliant, which happens in development projects where governments and development workers underestimate the poor, people easily lose their self-confidence and ability to make independent decisions. Thus, development assistance will continue to fail (Ibid: 53). Bester's Camp and Gugulethu Central Meat Market were, however, not the only projects that met with difficulties in the financial and management structures, which consequently led to decreased community participation. According to most of the citizens interviewed by the research team, their communities also, after GEAR was introduced, faced a situation where the consultant architects on the project had a decisive role in formulating and mediating the applications. Previously, by contrast, local people were directly concerned with the development projects to a far greater extent.

The citizens involved in the Gugulethu Central Meat Market had a large measure of autonomy in formulating a planning and architectural brief, in identifying an appropriate management structure, and in establishing reporting practices that validate the work of representative members. Although this project came up against financial obstacles within the RDP period, which resulted in accumulated debts to suppliers and contractors, the situation became, increasingly difficult after GEAR was introduced. Subsequently, local municipality was approached by the development consultants on behalf of an executive committee, and asked to provide ablution blocks and underwrite the outstanding loan from the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA). What then happened was that two distinct groups formed within the Central Meat Market, namely, the steering committee and the community. The community had its roots back in 1985, when street traders concentrated their activities instead of competing with each other. In 1997, the steering committee (the executive committee) included three different groups of people: Umazamo, traders and local authority representatives. This meant that the earlier local authority no longer stood in relation to the market as a regulatory authority; instead it was actively involved in strategic and day-to-day management of the project. Thus, a formalisation of trade took place. Although this formalisation is said to be successful on the whole, and has improved predictability, the criticism against it is that it has widened the gap between the executive committee and the community (Ibid, 1999: 14-17). I would like to argue that if a participatory development approach is to be fulfilled, a fitting relationship must exist between the executive committee and the community, and also between the programme and the beneficiaries. This means that community members need to be fully involved in programmes, decision-making, evaluation and implementation, which was clearly not the situation for the local people in the Central Meat Market from 1996-onwards. However, one should keep in mind that one cannot blame the entire conflict on GEAR. Local conflicts, such as the one between the market-traders and the Umzamo in Gugulethu, arose in several communities where many different groups are involved in one project, and have to deal with new rules and new opportunities. In Bester's Camp, the people's demonstration against the Urban Foundation is another example of such local conflicts. Most of those conflicts are, however, largely overcome through processes of arbitration and mediation.

Finally, I would like to make an implicit assertion about community participation. It seems from the review of the development project and the literature review that people's conceptions of development and participation were more expectant just before and during the RDP period. Overcoming the apartheid era, which was characterised by economic, social and political separation, people found it easier and more worthwhile to participate than ever before. It seemed that the communities were filled with new optimism, hope for the future and for grassroots activity. South African citizens had given the government a mandate to implement the RDP and, thus, felt a sense of ownership and excitement at the prospect of 'their' government being in control. The national RDP office and the Minister Without Portfolio were the most concrete symbols of a new direction towards participation, and attacking poverty and deprivation (Barberton, 1998: 5-6). Once GEAR was introduced, which appeared to favour growth concerns instead of the equity concerns of the RDP, it became more difficult for the people to identify themselves with the national development strategy. Lodge (in Klandermans et al., 2001: 13) argues that the growing opposition from trade unions towards GEAR and its associated neo-liberal measures helps to explain the decline in public confidence in the Mandela administration in 1997 and 1998, and subsequently in the Mbeki administration. It is further argued by Green-Thompson that the morale on the ground became more adversarial and impatient when GEAR replaced the RDP. He describes the expectations of the RDP and its demise in the following way:

"This was music to the ears of those working in the church, as our main focus was also for the poor and deprived... Where we could, we participated in programmes to educate people and empower them to become involved in the process of reconstruction... All of a sudden, the RDP office was gone, and with it the hopes and aspirations of millions of South Africans" (Green-Thompson, 1997).

5.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has described how the two development projects, Bester's Camp and Gugulethu Central Meat Market, located in different South African townships, one in Durban and one in Cape Town, have been affected by the government's change of development policy and development focus, from the RDP to GEAR. The two community projects in Bester's Camp

and Gugulethu show how the adoption of GEAR firstly resulted in a shift of management structure and subsidies, i.e. a shift from direct management by the state to increased control by local government within the developmental sphere. This change could have been positive for the communities, as the local government is closest to the people; however, the problem comes with the transfer of state subsidy money to local government. Increased government control over financial support has led to restructuring and the withdrawal of major funders within the developmental sphere. Secondly, it seems that the people find it more difficult to identify with the technocratic language of GEAR than the equity concerns of the RDP. This is just an implicit assertion, but I think that since the RDP was born out of the trenches in the struggle for freedom, it has an enormous symbolic role amongst the public. GEAR, on the other hand, does not refer to the citizens in the same way as it consists of non-participative and neo-liberal elements. I think that the policies of the RDP, and the RDP offices, were far more visible and much closer to the people than what GEAR is.

Overall, from the case studies reviewed, it appears that the main obstacle that communities are facing since the government introduced the high-handed, technocratic GEAR, is that local governments have taken over the management of the development projects without much financial support from the state. Reduced state funding opportunities have in turn led to a situation where the communities experience limited local authority in terms of financial management and the channelling of their initiatives into predefined courses of action. The outcome results in further-reduced opportunities for training and first hand local involvement.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter aims to summarise the findings of all the chapters and to answer the research question about the government's development approach, i.e. whether or not the ANC has drifted away from the participatory development approach, which was favoured by the RDP.

As we have seen in this thesis, community participation means different things to different people. To some, participation is about empowerment and participatory democracy; to others, it is about formal and informal private sector initiatives and capital. The discussion in Chapter Two shows how community development in South Africa has continued to rely predominantly on modernist reference points, which are increasingly showing signs of inadequacy in relation to contemporary issues and contexts. Regarding both theoretical and empirical findings in this thesis, I am arguing that a more radical approach to development is needed, the benefits of which would be, among other things, that:

- Poor people are encouraged to participate more directly in development projects, deciding their own affairs.
- Community participation can increase the efficiency of development activities and make better use of expensive external costs.
- Poor people can increase their personal and institutional capacities, and in such ways become self-empowered.

After examining and comparing the RDP and GEAR policies within the context of the participatory development debate, I have come to understand that GEAR does not aspire to a people-driven development approach, as was the core focus of the RDP. Macro-economic growth and privatisation have instead been placed high on the development agenda, before redistribution and human resources. As the discussion in Chapter Four shows, references to social development exist in GEAR - particularly to education, health and welfare services, housing, land reform and infrastructure - as key determinants in economic growth and redistribution. But, within the entire context and dominant thrust of GEAR, social development clearly takes a secondary position. Indeed, the introduction of GEAR indicates

the government's visible shift in policy in response to international economic trends. Such a conservative and integrated macro-economic framework proves that the ANC stresses fiscal and monetary discipline ahead of the ideals of community participation. The GEAR strategy reflects neo-liberal conditionality and fiscal austerity imposed by the so-called Washington consensus. This is what Professor Nabeel Hamdi describes as "a neo-liberal plot to enable the market to play a bigger role in the supply of housing, services, utilities and the like"²⁴.

Addressing the Reconstruction and Development Programme (1994) and the White Paper on Local Government (1998) the perception has been that participation should involve communities mobilising for their rights. People-centred development is a central concept in the RDP with a people-driven process as a key principle. The RDP does not see the role of the state as delivering goods and services to passive citizens. Rather it stresses growing empowerment and reliance on the energies of communities. The notion has been that community engagement with the state would mean that what was provided and delivered would be appropriate. GEAR (1996) calls for "a redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor", requiring that resources from the economic surplus should be used to meet basic needs, and health and education for the poor. The policy directive regarding local government is primarily set out in Chapter 7 of the Constitution. The White Paper on Local Government, Section B (see Chapter Three), which was established in 1998, explores the notion of developmental local government. An important observation arising after a brief investigation of the conceptualisation of community participation in government policy is that there have been serious disparities between policy and practice. The Constitution can be regarded as the cornerstone with regard to community participation, but it has not been abided by (Vaughan et al., 2003). Despite assertions to the contrary on the part of government, the notions of community participation that emanated from the RDP dissipated after the abandonment of the programme. The RDP and White Paper on Local Government provide for effective participation, but in many respects the ideals have not been realised. There have been a number of reasons for the deviation from the ideals of community participation articulated in South Africa's national policy. First, the early focus on participation, which characterised the RDP, has been undermined by a concern with delivery. After 1996 participation became associated with non-delivery. As a consequence, the government

²⁴ Nabeel Hamdi has written the foreword in the seminar book, *Integrating Participation: Participatory Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, edited by Lyons, Smuts and Stephens, 2000, see p.2.

concentrated all its efforts on delivery, and pushed participation to the margins. Secondly, in the wake of the RDP, and underpinned by a neo-liberal philosophy, the idea of public/private partnerships (PPP) emerged. The main thrust was to get the private sector to undertake programmes and projects, rather than the state. This has been the rationale for the setting up of a PPPs support unit at the Development Bank of Southern Africa. PPPs displaced the notion of community participation and community development (Ibid, 2003).

The research done by Lyons, Smuts and Stephens, as reviewed in Chapter Five, shows that there is a strong relation between the policy changes and people's involvement in South Africa's development process. After the adoption of GEAR, the South African citizens have been facing a situation where the local governments and/or state providers are replacing previously parastatal, private and semi-private funders, and where the national government has at the same time reduced its funding to the developmental local sphere. Regarding its emphasis on reducing the budget deficit, cutting back on state spending and reducing the size of the public sector, GEAR undermines the ability of central and provincial governments to assist local government to carry out its duties and responsibilities (Van Niekerk, 2000). National government's withdrawal from direct involvement in development processes has given local governments more power in the development process and increased responsibility for their citizens. They are also becoming more active in promoting local economic growth. As a result, more opportunity for community participation could arise as local government is closest to the people and because local government can be assigned responsibility for the provision of infrastructure and services. Because of the decentralisation of the national government it is up to local government to take on the 'political' leadership of the development process. But in order to foster participation, some responsibilities must be transferred from the central government to local governments. Central government plays an important role in providing local governments with guidelines, financial support and quality control related to redistribution and sustaining benefits. This paper shows that when national government reduces its financial management to local governments and increases its control of payments to the development sector, local governments are not able to involve and educate local people in development projects in a satisfactory way. However, the assignment of responsibilities to local governments cannot, by itself, ensure participation. There are different factors that can impede community participation; participation can be held back if the composition of local government is misrepresented or when local elites take control of

benefits intended for others, particularly the poor. The inability of the poor to bear the opportunity costs of their participation can also be an obstacle. Consequently, another challenge to overcome is the harmonisation of participatory approaches; while it is relatively easy to build consensus around the participatory methodology, it is more difficult to bring various sectors and projects into harmony and effective collaboration. Thus, the leadership of (local) government in this aspect is vitally important.

Owing to the above findings, I will assume that the development process in South Africa is underpinned by a powerful statist approach engaging with state bureaucracy. With the 'new culture' of GEAR, the role of the state has shifted, both in the extent of its influence and the level at which it operates. Since 1996 participatory development has become increasingly bureaucratised and limited under predefined programmes and funding criteria. This change is paralleled in the change in the national development policy and with changes in the role of local government.

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